

Committee: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB1098

Position: Favorable

3 March 2023

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and the members of the Appropriations Committee,

As a student, advocate, and bilingual individual, I support HB1098, which establishes better conditions for English language learners across Maryland's schools.

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Shivani Sidh and I respectfully request a favorable vote on HB1098.

I am a sophomore at the University of Maryland, College Park, double majoring in Public Policy and International Relations, and minoring in U.S. Latina/o Studies. I practice what I learn in my everyday life, often by joining groups in my community. Specifically, this year, I do this as an intern for the Legislative Latino Caucus, as the Deputy Director of Government Affairs for the University's Student Government Association, and as a Committee Member for the student-led group "Preventing Sexual Assault".

I am fluent in English and Hindi, as well as proficient in Mandarin and Spanish. Knowing these languages is a privilege and has provided me with wonderful connections. A prominent example of this is the discussions that I engage in with fellow U.S. Latina/o Studies students: given our identity as bilingual students, we often discuss the impact of this in our lives. Each time, language is revealed to be an unnecessary barrier in schooling. By this, I mean that we have witnessed the many flaws of the current English learning system.

Specifically, many learners are subjected to wrongful placements, while students and teachers alike struggle through a lack of resources. A peer of mine detailed his experience to me, expressing how he believes that as a result of having a Latinx and Arab name, he was wrongfully placed in ESOL during elementary school. This is so, despite being fluent in English and not registering for it, he was placed in the course and forced to stay despite countless claims countering the choice. Throughout the course, he faced further difficulties, as he was forced to educate other students because the teacher had not received sufficient training.

Young children should not endure being erroneously placed in these classes. The schools must be provided with the resources they need to adequately equip their teachers to educate English learning children in Maryland. Given the fact that the current system is troubled, yet still growing by an average of 7.4% each year¹, I respectfully request a favorable vote on HB1098 in providing additional resources for English language learning.



Thank you,

Shivani Sidh.

Student, University of Maryland – College Park, '25

¹ Maryland State Department of Education, "Final Report on Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools" (Maryland State Department of Education 2022), 23.