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Health and Government Operations  
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Health Occupations and Long Term Care

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Joint Committee on Program Open Space  
and Agricultural Land Preservation

**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB1098 - Education - English Learners and Dual  
Language Immersion Programs - Funding and Establishment  
(Multilingualism Is an Asset Act)**

Thank you, Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Delegate Robbyn Lewis here on behalf of HB1096, which will deliver equitable education for English language learners, which was one of the most significant promises in the 2021 Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Over 98,000 of Maryland's children who are English Language Learners. This term refers to those who have limited proficiency in the English language, including children and adults of all ages. This bill pertains just to children from Kindergarten thru 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, passed in 2021, mandates an annual budget appropriation of \$10 million dollars for dual language immersion programs. This is how we deliver our promise to our kids.

It will interest you to know that there are over 98,000 English Language Learners in Maryland – children in every single county and Baltimore city. A total of about 190 languages are spoken in Maryland. About 30,000 live in Prince George's county; Montgomery county is home to almost that number, following by Baltimore country with around 10,000 children, and Baltimore city with around 9,000. Regarding language distribution, the majority of our English Language Learners speak Spanish at home – around 70,000 little ones. The next most frequently spoken languages are

French, Chinese, Arabic and Amharic. The age distribution of these English Language Learners skews younger; the majority are in elementary school, but around 20,000 are high-school age. And all them deserve our support so they can grow and reach their full potential.

Dual language immersion is different – better – than bilingual education. In fact, students taught in bilingual education settings have fallen several percentiles below the nation's average graduation rate.

Studies have shown that dual language immersion programs are effective in helping English learners improve their language proficiency and academic performance.

This bill proposes an equitable distribution of funding, directing it to students and schools with the greatest need. The formula takes account of the number of English Language Learners in a given school district, and also their level of English proficiency, providing more support where needed.

I had the opportunity to visit the only dual language immersion school in Maryland, which just so happens to be located in my district. Its called Archbishop Borders Elementary Middle School. The teachers are all bilingual. The students are extraordinary. Each will graduate from 8<sup>th</sup> grade completely fluent and competent in two languages: English and Spanish. They will be ready to succeed in high school and ready for the dynamic, diverse world that awaits them.

In closing, thank you for your consideration and respectfully request a favorable report for HB1098.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robbyn Lewis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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