



BILL:	House Bill (HB) 1098	DATE:	March 7, 2023
SUBJECT:	Education - English Learners and Dual Language Immersion Programs - Funding and Establishment (Multilingualism Is an Asset Act)	COMMITTEE:	Appropriations
POSITION:	Support		
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Explanation

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) respectfully submits this testimony in **support of House Bill 1098** – English Learners and Dual Language Immersion Programs - Funding and Establishment (Multilingualism Is an Asset Act). English learners (ELs) are Maryland’s fastest growing student subgroup - growing from 56,072 English learners in 2014 to 105,653 in 2023. English learners are distributed across all grade spans - with 61,568 (or 58.3%) in Elementary Schools – and speak a variety of languages, though predominantly Spanish (79,325 or 75.1%). MSDE fully expects the number to continue to grow and accelerate. Ensuring high-quality instructional opportunities for English learners now and in the future is paramount to the long-term success of our State. This work is even more urgent given the dire student outcome data in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics where, in the most recent data release from MSDE, only 13% of ELs in grades 3-8 scored proficient in ELA; only 6% of ELs in grades 3-8 scored proficient in mathematics. In English 10, 8% were proficient and in Algebra I only 1% were proficient.¹ Maryland cannot succeed absent the success of our English learners.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future is a once-in-a-generation, comprehensive education reform law, a law designed to grow with and remain relevant to the State through the next decade and beyond. Key to this relevance are the built-in mechanisms of the Blueprint legislation that require continued study of the policies and practices associated with the Blueprint’s pillars, including Blueprint Pillar 4: More Resources to Ensure that All Students are Successful. The Blueprint provides funding for ELs to ensure local education agencies can afford to implement the highest-quality, research-based EL instructional models. While the Blueprint provides an essential leap forward, the Blueprint also recognized and required the MSDE to establish and report on the findings from an English learner workgroup.² The Blueprint directs the Workgroup on English learners to:

- Collect data on English learners and the services available to them;
- Review methods of teaching and providing other services to English learners in Maryland and elsewhere;
- Make recommendations on improving the education of English learners, including whether additional funding should be provided; and
- Submit reports on the research and recommendations of the Workgroup.

¹ January 24, 2023, MSDE State Board Presentation: Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program 2022 Results, Part 2. <https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2023/0124/MCAPAssessmentResultsPart2.pdf>.

² Final Report: Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools (2022), https://blueprint.marylandpublicschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/11/Workgroup-on-English-Learners-in-Public-Schools_Final-Report_2022.pdf.

The Workgroup was composed of legislators, educators, stakeholders, advocates, university professors, and experts from within Maryland and across the country. House Bill 1098 addresses two key sets of findings from the final workgroup report and recommendations for which Statutory modification are necessary.

The Multilingualism is an Asset Act codifies the EL workgroup report's recommendations associated with the establishment of high-quality two-way immersion programs throughout the State. Maryland's rapidly increasing linguistic diversity in public schools is providing more opportunities for two-way immersion (TWI) programs. Including the two LEAs that currently provide immersion options, seven LEAs have populations that could provide the environment for two-way immersion initiatives at the elementary school level.

In the past decade, there has been a blossoming of causal research on dual language immersion education. Valentino and Reardon, for example, found that 14,000 ELs (with many home languages) placed in any type of bilingual program (i.e., Dual Language Immersion - DLI, transitional bilingual, or developmental bilingual) grew faster in ELA performance than their peers placed in monolingual English programs. They began outperforming peers in monolingual English programs by grade 6 and reached a 0.15 standard deviation advantage in ELA by grade 7.³ Similarly, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) funded two causal studies of dual language immersion effects. The research strongly suggests that reading, math, and science performance was statistically similar for program type (two-way vs. one-way), first language, English learners vs. native speakers of other languages, and students whose native language matches the partner language vs. students whose native language doesn't match the partner language.⁴ Dual language effects strongly increase as the fraction of native-language-matched students in the school increases. This is suggestive evidence for the role of cultural adjacency in support of student achievement.⁵

House Bill 1098 makes available the funding necessary for LEAs to implement TWI programs if they submit a clear plan that demonstrates the program will be aligned to the structures and conditions for which research indicates likelihood of positive student outcomes.

Investments in two-way immersion programs can yield important returns but the Blueprint for Maryland's Future funding formula does not alone provide sufficient resources for local education agencies to fully implement two-way immersion programs at scale. The Maryland Adequacy Study Final Report recommended adopting the professional judgement panel approach formula weight for English learners—a recommendation later adopted by the Kirwan Commission.⁶ This weight was designed to fund an EL-to-teacher ratio of 15:1. This weight was not designed to support the costs of implementing and sustaining two-way immersion programs. Also, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future funding formula provides for State aid resources to local educational agencies to serve English learners based on English learner enrollment only, even though two-way immersion programs enroll both ELs and non-ELs. Federal funds do not help in this case as Federal Title III funds are not sufficient for covering additional costs associated with two-way immersion since Title III funds cannot be spent on non-ELs.

³ Rachel A. Valentino and Sean F. Reardon, "Effectiveness of four instructional programs designed to serve English learners: Variation by ethnicity and initial English proficiency," *Stanford University Graduate School of Education* (2014), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED566267.pdf>.

⁴ Jennifer L. Steele, Robert O. Slater, Gema Zamarro, Trey Miller, Jennifer Li, Susan Burkhauser, and Michael Bacon, "Effects of Dual Language Immersion Programs on Student Achievement: Evidence from Lottery Data," *American Educational Research Journal* 54, no. 1 (2017): 282S-306S.

⁵ Jennifer L. Steele, Johanna Watzinger-Tharp, Robert O. Slater, Gregg Roberts, and Karl Bowman, "Achievement Effects of Dual Language Immersion in One-way and Two-way Programs: Evidence from a State Scale-up in Utah," (2021), https://jensteele1.github.io/files/Utah_2021April26.pdf.

⁶ Agenblick, Palaich & Associates, "Final Report of the Study of Adequacy of Funding for Education in Maryland," (Denver, CO, 2016). <https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/Documents/adequacystudy/AdequacyStudyReportFinal112016.pdf>.

House Bill 1098 also provides a pathway to resource adequacy for students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), who comprise a relatively small proportion of recently arrived English learners in the United States, comprising about 10 to 20 percent of the population.⁷ “However, these students often represent the most challenging of our ELLs because of their limited first-language literacy skills, frequent gaps in academic knowledge and skills, and, sometimes, critical social and emotional needs.”⁸

The EL report makes additional key recommendations associated with providing nuance to the EL weight in the law. Formula adjustments to the Blueprint formula English learner weight in the House Bill 1098 would ensure the Blueprint for Maryland’s future can provide the resources necessary to ensure proper opportunities for English learners regardless of the local prevalence of their home language, diseconomies of scale associated with low EL enrollments not generating the per-pupil revenue necessary to serve ELs, and the relative English proficiency level of a local education agency’s EL population.

These additional resources would position Maryland’s LEAs to implement the best-in-class instructional opportunities the Blueprint envisions. English learners are thriving across the country – it is time for Maryland to do its part. MSDE respectfully urges a **favorable report on House Bill 1098** from the Committee. Please contact Justin Dayhoff at 410-767-0439 or justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov for any additional information.

⁷ Advocates for Children of New York, *Students with Interrupted Formal Education: A Challenge for New York City Public Schools* (New York: 2010); and J. Ruiz-de-Velasco and M. Fix, *Overlooked and Underserved: Immigrant Students in U.S. Secondary Schools* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2000).

⁸ Brenda Custodio and Judith B. O’Loughlin, “Students with Interrupted Formal Education, Understanding Who They Are”, *American Educator*, Spring 2020, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1249795.pdf>.