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Testimony in Support of House Bill 1098

Education - English Language Learners and Dual Language Immersion Programs - Funding and Establishment (Multilingualism Is an Asset Act)

Appropriations

March 7, 2023

1:00pm

The Baltimore Teachers Union supports House Bill 1098 with amendments and urges a favorable report on this bill.

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents 8,280 teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, clinicians, librarians, secretaries, community school site specialists, bus transportation aides, and many more school-based and central office support staff. We are 4 out of 5 workers in Baltimore City Public Schools, serving 75,595 students and their families. Our national union, the American Federation of Teachers, has over 1.7 million members in the United States and its territories.

The BTU offers the following amendments to further strengthen HB1098, Multilingualism is an Asset Act. We do so to ensure that this bill, which is an outcome of the MSDEs Blueprint workgroup for ELL, is culturally sustaining and equity-minded.

For amendments we suggest the following:

- a.) Bill language requiring data integrity and incentivizing language proficiency gains. This is to ensure that the weighting for lower proficiency multilingual ELs is not abused or misreported. It seeks to ensure schools with large newcomer populations are rewarded and not punished if those students make proficiency gains.
- b.) Make the application process for dual language school certification simple. The bill should specify support in the application process at state level that will ensure that the process isn't overly onerous and schools with fewer resources but higher needs have a clear pathway for becoming a dual language school.

- c.) Clarify the process for stakeholder engagement. Baltimore City Public Schools has two dual language schools (Baltimore International Academy) which should be consulted with by MSDE/Blueprint Workgroup on ELLs in Public Schools as dual language schools in Montgomery and Prince George's counties have been.
- d.) Language needs to acknowledge a future commitment to studying solutions and funding for older multilingual English learners in secondary schools, and other outstanding issues included in Comm WELL's policy recommendations.

Our amendments seek to strengthen "Multilingualism Is An Asset Act." We also seek to highlight the need for MSDE to engage with Baltimore City Public Schools and our existing Dual Language Immersion programs as key stakeholders in this work moving forward.

BTU urges a favorable report on House Bill 1098 with amendments.