



**Testimony Supporting HB1098
Senate Appropriations Committee:**

March 03, 2023

Position: **SUPPORT**

Multilingualism as an Asset Act of 2023

My name is Carlos Orbe. I am the Public Affairs Specialist for Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), an association housed at MD Nonprofits of over 300 Latino community leaders, business owners, and Latino-led nonprofits. MLU's mission is to unify efforts across the state to advocate and organize for the benefit of Maryland's Latino community. Our vision is that the Latino community in Maryland thrives, achieves excellence, innovates, and continually makes progress economically, socially, and environmentally. We utilize data-driven and evidence-based approaches to build coalitions to advocate and create a space for every Latino to have a voice. In doing so, we look to create or advocate for a network of resources to support Latino-initiatives that positively impact the community overall. For these reasons, I am writing to express my support for the Education – English Learners and Dual Language Immersion Programs – Funding and Establishment (Multilingualism as an Asset Act), HB1098, supported by a myriad of Delegates, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus, and the Maryland State Department of Education.

Established in 2020, MLU has become one of the most involved non-profit organizations within Maryland's Latino community. From its inception and as a civil right, MLU's members have embraced English language learner infrastructure and dual language programs, including equity across the state as a principle for our minority communities at-risk. If this bill is implemented, it will have serious implications for how Maryland chooses to educate English learners (EL) going forward. Such methods include, but are not limited to, providing extra funding for certain EL's subject to certain conditions; establishing the Dual Language Immersion Program in the State Department of Education to develop, fund, implement, scale up, and sustain the expansion of research-based dual language two-way immersion programs in the State; requiring the Governor, in fiscal year 2025 and each fiscal year thereafter, to include \$10,000,000 in the annual budget bill for dual language immersion grants under the Program.

Maryland Latinos Unidos acknowledges these innovative strides can truly transform foundational learning for many of our minority communities in various settings across the state. The background of this ongoing effort includes workgroups on English Learners in Public Schools. From these studies a series of recommendations to properly support English learners (ELs) in Maryland have been assembled. Two out of the nine recommendations require legislative action, Recommendation 3 and 9.

I. RECOMMENDATION 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT ELS. This bill proposal will introduce a new mechanism in Maryland to develop, fund, implement, scale, and sustain a statewide approach to the expansion of research-based dual language two-way immersion programs and schools. A percentage of the requested funds will be allocated to startup dual language immersive schools for English learners so that they can continue to develop their primary language while learning a second language. The other percentage will be allocated to sustain dual language schools by allotting a per pupil allotment for English Learners in those programs.

II. RECOMMENDATION 9: FUNDING ALLOCATIONS AND SPENDING DECISIONS THAT SUPPORT SUCCESS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS-Workgroup study national model to look at the way the blueprint is funding English Learners and will help determine how to allocate funding for English learners based on proficiency level needs. It will impact all English learners' students and will increase the weight of the quality of education of the state of Maryland from Silver to Gold.

For all of these reasons and many more, please support HB1098 and help provide Maryland's English language learners a fighting chance to truly integrate in our great education and working class. Doing so would have a such a long-lasting impact on business, community, education, and health.

Respectfully,
Carlos Orbe, Jr.
Public Affairs Specialist
Maryland Latinos Unidos

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