



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
Delegate Mark S. Chang, Vice Chair
Appropriations Committee Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: March 3rd, 2023
RE: HB1098 Multilingualism Is an Asset Act

The MLLC supports HB1098 Multilingualism Is an Asset Act

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1098.

The main difference between a dual-language immersion (DLI) program and a more traditional foreign language class offered is the approach to second-language learning.¹ In an immersion program, students learn the core curriculum through the lens of an additional language.² By contrast, in a traditional foreign language class, the language itself is the subject of instruction.³ Teachers deliver the same academic content and standards as traditional classroom teachers, while providing instruction in two languages.⁴ Usually, a dual-language immersion program starts by teaching 10% of the class day in the secondary language and 90% in the native language, then eventually, 50% of the class day is taught in the secondary language and 50% of the class day is taught in the native language. For the Latino community, this means that immigrant youth will develop bilingualism and biliteracy in English and Spanish. For the State it means that we will have a larger, better trained multilingual workforce at our disposal.

Dual language programs allow immigrant students in Maryland to not only learn English but further develop their native language and become truly bilingual. Additionally, dual language enrichment models are seen as one of the best options for closing the achievement gap between English learners and native English speakers in the US school system by as early as the 5th grade.⁵ Studies of DLI have shown that students in such programs perform as well as or better –

¹ *Dual language immersion program*. Arlington Public Schools. (2023, February 9). <https://www.apsva.us/english-learners/immersion-program/#:~:text=Dual%20Language%20Immersion%20is%20an%20providing%20instruction%20in%20two%20languages>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Howard, C. (2018). (rep.). *Update: MCPS Dual Language Program*. Montgomery County Public Schools. https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2018/ED/20180723/20180723_ED1.pdf.

⁵ Grayson, K. (2012, April). *Two-way dual language immersion programs*. Intercultural Development Research Association. <https://www.idra.org/resource-center/two-way-dual-language-immersion-programs/>.

which are all typically tested in English – especially by mid-elementary school.⁶ A study in Portland, Oregon found that students randomly assigned to DLI outperformed their peers on state accountability tests in reading by 13 percent of a standard deviation in grade 5 and by 22 percent of a standard deviation in grade 8.⁷ This represents roughly seven additional months of learning in grade 5 and nine additional months in grade 8.⁸ Additionally, students who were classified as English learners in kindergarten and were randomly assigned to DLI were 3 percentage points more likely to have reached English proficiency by grade 6.⁹ Interestingly, the effects of immersion programs on student test scores appeared to be similar for students who were native English speakers and those who were native speakers of other languages.¹⁰ This means that parents with children who are native-English speakers also have the opportunity to enroll them in DLI schools, where they can become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural.

One indicator of an ESOL program’s success determined by the Maryland State Department of Education is the percentage of students improving their English proficiency. In Prince George’s County Public Schools, approximately 50% of English learners meet their growth targets, with students at the intermediate and advanced levels making the lowest percentage of growth.¹¹ This conveys a clear need for more efficient programming. The most recent data from the Maryland State Department of Education indicates that English learners represented 11.5% of the entire state K-12 student population.¹² This is 4% higher than the national level.¹³ In total, Maryland English learners speak over 200 languages other than English.¹⁴

The Latino community, and all Marylanders, want their children to grow up fluent in English as well as fluent in their native language or a secondary language, putting them ahead of the game in cognitive ability.

This bill establishes 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.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1098.

⁶ Steele, J. L., Slater, R., Zamarro, G., Miller, T., Li, J. J., Burkhauser, S., & Bacon, M. (2017, November 3). *Dual-language immersion programs raise student achievement in English*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9903.html.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *ELL Focus Work Group Response - Meeting 2: February 8, 2021*. (2021).

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cocr-hVvk-tZhkpgq5nvRGjFCJYMj3l0a/view>.

¹² *Workgroup on English Learners in Public School*. Maryland State Department of Education. (2022, November). Retrieved March 3, 2023, from

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/Blueprint/Documents/Reports122021/WorkgroupEnglishLearnersPublicSchoolsFinalReport.pdf>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.