



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership

2311 Benjamin Bldg.
College Park, Maryland 20742-1125
301.405.3324 TEL 301.314.9055 FAX

March 2, 2023

HB 1098 SUPPORT

Re: HB 1098, Multilingualism Is an Asset Act

As an educational researcher with more than twenty years of experience teaching and conducting research to support quality education that promotes equity and multilingualism, and as a teacher educator who prepares Maryland's future teaching force to meet the needs of our diverse student population, I am writing to present testimony in support of HB **1098**.

My **work** builds upon decades of research that has documented the benefits of bilingualism, biliteracy, and dual **language** education programsⁱ. Dual language education offers benefits for *both* language minority students (English language learners or Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and language majority students (English speaking students who wish to acquire a second language). Dual language (or two-way immersion) programs integrate students across linguistic, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines and have been shown to offer the **most promise in closing the achievement gap**ⁱⁱ. Research has found that instructional models that use MLLs' home languages for instruction promote better outcomes in terms of academic achievement, English proficiency, graduation rates, and attitudes toward schoolⁱⁱⁱ.

When **well implemented**, dual immersion bilingual programs lead to **superior academic achievement**, multilingualism, and bring the **multiple benefits** of integration across linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic differences. Implementing dual language bilingual programs moves a larger number and broader range of students towards ambitious outcomes, including attaining the state's **Seal of Biliteracy**. While dual language/ two-way immersion is a promising approach to boosting student outcomes, it requires a substantial effort from state, local and school leaders to execute and sustain at a high-quality.

Essential to **well implemented** dual language programs is **adequate funding** and **well prepared teachers**. Research^{iv} indicates MLLs perform best when teachers are required to have state certification as a bilingual and/or an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher. **Highly qualified teachers** in bilingual/dual language programs need to possess not only the knowledge and skills necessary for their grade level/**content** area, but must also understand the process of second language acquisition, simultaneous bilingual acquisition, **bilingual child development**, and have strong proficiency in the languages they teach. Schools across the state are facing a **shortage** of qualified bilingual educators, which could compromise the quality of language program implementation.

As a teacher educator and as a certified bilingual and ESOL teacher with experiences in elementary and middle schools, I am confident that this bill (HB 1098) is an important opportunity to **strengthen education in Maryland**. As a parent of multilingual children who have benefitted from dual language/two-way immersion programs in Montgomery County Public Schools, I fully support the expansion of dual language programs across the state that would include more students from diverse backgrounds.

I respectfully request a favorable vote for HB 1098. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Melinda Martin-Beltrán, PhD

University of Maryland Professor of Education, Maryland Voter, and Parent of children in Maryland's Public Schools

ⁱ Billings, E., Martin-Beltrán, M., & Hernandez, A. (2010). Beyond English development: Bilingual approaches to teaching immigrant students and English Language Learners. In C. Faltis & G. Valdés (Eds.) *National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook: Education, Immigrant Students, Refugee Students, and English Learners*, (pp. 384–413). New York: Teachers College Press.

Martin-Beltrán, M. (2009). Cultivating space for the language boomerang: The interplay of two languages as academic resources. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*. 8(2), 25-53.

Martin-Beltrán, M. (2010). The two-way language bridge: Co-constructing bilingual language learning opportunities. *The Modern Language Journal*. 94(2), 254-277.

Martin-Beltrán, M. (2014). "What do you want to say?" How adolescents use translanguaging to expand learning opportunities. *International Multilingual Research Journal*. 8(3)208-230. doi:10.1080/19313152.2014.914372

ⁱⁱ See research findings in the following:

Ramirez, J. D., Pasta, D. J., Yuen, S. D., Billings, D. K., & Ramey, D. R. (1991). *Longitudinal study of structured English immersion strategy, early-exit, and late-exit bilingual education programs for language minority children* (Vols. 1–2, US Department of Education Report, Contract No. 300–87–0 156). San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International.

Rolstad, K., Mahoney, K., & Glass, G. V. (2005). The big picture: A meta-analysis of program effectiveness research on English language learners. *Educational policy*, 19(4), 572-594.

Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. (1997). *School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students*. NCBE Resource Collection Series, No. 9.

Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2002). *A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement*. Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

Wells, A. S., Fox, L., and Cordova-Cobo, D. (2016). *How Racially Diverse Schools and Classrooms Can Benefit All Students*. New York City and Washington, DC: The Century Foundation.

Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2012). *Dual language education for a transformed world*. Dual Language Education of New Mexico/Fuente Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ See also August & Hakuta, 1997; August & Shanahan, 2006; Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994; Collier, 1992; Cummins, 1984; Genesee et al., 2006; Krashen, 1985, 1996; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Fillmore & Valadez, 1986

^{iv} Boyle, A., August, D., Tabaku, L., Cole, S., & Simpson-Baird, A. (2015). *Dual language education programs: Current state policies and practices*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition.