



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

BILL: House Bill 56 **DATE:** JANUARY 24, 2023

SUBJECT: Public Schools - Dual Language **COMMITTEE:** WAYS AND MEANS
Education - Teacher Certification,
Program Implementation, and Study

POSITION: Oppose

CONTACT: Yousuf Ahmed
410-767-0090
Yousuf.ahmed@maryland.gov

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) respectfully opposes **House Bill 56 Public Schools - Dual Language Education - Teacher Certification, Program Implementation, and Study**, which specifies that the State Board of Education and Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board shall adopt regulations related to the certification of and renewal of a certificate for dual language teachers in public schools, requires the State Department of Education to develop guidelines for the implementation of dual language immersion programs in public schools aligned with the Guiding Principles of Dual Language Education published by the Center for Applied Linguistics, and requires MSDE to convene a workgroup and make recommendations regarding determining best practices for the selection or development of assessments and metrics for student achievement and language proficiency for dual language students. **MSDE wholeheartedly agrees with the importance of the policy areas addressed in this legislation, but MSDE also recognizes that the provisions of the bill are duplicative to existing work, other proposed legislation, current MSDE policies, and already-published Blueprint workgroup reports.**

The establishment of a workgroup in HB 56 is duplicative of the work completed by the Workgroup on English Learners established by HB1372 (2021). The Workgroup on English Learners was established in the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Act during the 2021 Maryland legislative session (HB1372). To address the specified requirements and position Maryland as a national leader to support English learners, the EL Workgroup held a series of 16 meetings from August 2021 to October 2022. You can view all sessions and report details online, [here](#). The Workgroup was charged with collecting data on English learners (ELs) in the State, reviewing national research and current practices, and making recommendations to improve the education of English learners in the State. A final report, published in December 2022, included nine recommendations focusing on equitable and valid assessments for English learners, scaling two-way immersion programs, effective models of English language development programs, and teacher preparation and licensure policies to support English learners. Detailed description of the workgroup can be found on page 11 of the report.

The [workgroup’s final report](#) is published on the MSDE website and was provided to the General Assembly.

MSDE is currently promulgating regulations that have gone through extensive public feedback and engagement on the entire chapter governing areas of certification that align with the intent of House Bill 56 and allow for dual certification pathways and corresponding credentials. The law, as drafted, is well-intentioned but MSDE has begun this policy work proactively based on the workgroups’ recommendations. Completing the intent of this portion of the law does not require statutory language. For example:

- The report lays out and describes the research-based, effective models of instruction for two-way immersion programs (see report, beginning page 46 – Implementation of Instructional Programs to Support ELs);
- MSDE will already be, as per the report’s recommendation, convening a workgroup formed around EL reclassification (see report, beginning on page 81);
- MSDE will already be moving to administer the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) in Spanish (see report, beginning on page 65);
- MSDE is moving forward with policies and regulation to support improvements to teacher preparation policies that support ELs (see report, beginning on page 84); and
- MSDE is updating Department policies and guidance to ensure MSDE can lead local education agency efforts in policy and practice to measure and support ELs at all stages.

Further, MSDE believes the provisions in House Bill 56 are addressed in the newly proposed Multilingualism is an Asset Act, which stems from the final report from the Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools. The bill specifically focuses on the following recommendations from the report:

- Recommendation 3a: Scale Dual Language Two-Way Immersion Programs (p. 47)
- Recommendation 9: Funding Allocations and Spending Decisions that Support Success for English Learners (p. 115)

MSDE will continue to lead the implementation of these recommendations, especially ones that can be addressed through a shift of practices and protocols at the Department level. However, recommendations 3a and 9 from the Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools hinge on statutory actions from the General Assembly. The newly drafted §5-224 in the Department-proposed Multilingualism is an Asset Act introduces 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. Most English learners in Maryland are in elementary grades and these students largely come from households where the predominant language spoken is Spanish. There is no debate that the best model for educating English learners is through culturally relevant and responsive dual language programs and schools.

Ultimately, MSDE wants to move beyond discussing best practices when the Workgroup on English Learners has already identified those practices, with extensive stakeholder feedback; and instead focus on implementing action now. MSDE is dedicated to building strong teacher pipelines – including for dual certification – and supporting the expansion of high-quality, research-based two-way immersion programs. Multilingualism is an asset, and how to educate English learners at scale is not a mystery. We are only as strong as our lowest achieving students, and the ultimate judge of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future's effectiveness will be the performance of historically underserved populations. The Maryland General Assembly’s Latino Caucus and MSDE are working together this session to advance statutory language to make demonstrative and non-duplicative changes that will improve the education landscape for English Learners in Maryland. However, due to existing Department efforts and competing legislation, we respectfully oppose **House Bill 56** and we request that you consider this information as you deliberate the bill. Please contact Yousuf Ahmed, at 410-767-0090, or yousuf.ahmed@maryland.gov, for any additional information.