

**HB 56- Support**  
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Bilingual Education: Improving How We Do It  
And Who Teaches It

Ways and Means Committee  
January 24, 2023

¡Buenas tardes! Good afternoon! Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Mi nombre es Sandra Gutiérrez. Soy una educadora bilingüe con 22 años de experiencia. Hoy he venido a testificar para apoyar el proyecto de ley **HB-56**.

Hello everyone, my name is Sandra Gutiérrez. I am a bilingual teacher, school leader, and teacher educator with 22 years of experience supporting multilingual and multicultural students and teachers in K-12 schools in Maryland and Washington, DC. Do you realize that you all would have understood the first part of my introduction in Spanish if you had attended a Spanish-English bilingual school? Yes, bilingual education is that powerful!

Dual language Bilingual Schools are growing exponentially across the nation, and Maryland is no exception. There are good reasons behind this. Research shows that bilingual education is a powerful way to transform students' lives. Students who reach high levels of proficiency in two languages outperform their peers in standardized tests, have greater cognitive flexibility and empathy, and have more success in higher education and the labor market. In short, bilingualism opens doors! This is especially true for immigrant students who get to preserve their first language and culture as they become highly proficient in English.

But how do we get students to reach high levels of bilingualism? It takes, more than anything else, highly trained, committed, passionate bilingual teachers and leaders. I have coached dozens of new teachers in dual language bilingual schools, and I can tell you one thing. They are eager to serve students, BUT in their first few years they do not have all the knowledge and skills they need to do it well. They have taught Spanish or English to native speakers before BUT they do not know how to teach bilingually YET. On average, as a instructional coach and trainer, it took me two years to teach a new bilingual teacher all the skills they need to develop rigorous thematic units, integrate content and language instruction, support their students' biliteracy development and translanguaging, and many other skills and dispositions they need to

provide TRANSFORMATIVE bilingual education. That is two years while the teacher is already in the classroom in front of students!

Why does this happen? In Maryland, unlike several other states where dual language programs are expanding, we do not yet have bilingual teacher preparation standards, bilingual teacher preparation programs, or a certification process that gets teachers ready to teach bilingually. A rigorous state-level certification process for bilingual teachers would allow new teachers to enter the classrooms more prepared instead of learning everything on the job.

This bill will make this possible! By creating a certification process for dual language teachers and developing guidelines for implementing dual language immersion programs in public schools, Maryland will finally have a pipeline of highly trained bilingual educators who have the key knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to transform students' lives.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to support this bill.

*¡Es lo mejor, es lo correcto, es lo que los niños y maestros bilingües de Maryland necesitan!*

It is what is best, it is what is right, it is what our Maryland bilingual teachers and children need!