

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 56
Public Schools – Dual Language Education – Teacher Certification, Program
Implementation, and Study**

**House Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 56, which would require the State Board of Education and the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board to create and adopt regulations for the certification of and renewal of a certificate for dual language teachers in public schools by 2024 and direct the State Department of Education to develop research-based guidelines for implementing dual language immersion programs in public schools. The steps in this legislation are consistent with recommendations from the Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools and will improve outcomes for English Learners and native English speakers alike.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Why Scale Dual Language Immersion Programs?

English Learners (ELs) represent 11.5% of Maryland's K-12 students and are the fastest growing student population in the state.¹ The vast majority (72%) of English Learners

¹ Blueprint for Maryland's Future Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools: Final Report. <https://marylandpublicschools.org/Blueprint/Documents/Reports122021/WorkgroupEnglishLearnersPublicSchoolsFinalReport.pdf>, p. 18 (Accessed January 2023).

in Maryland speak Spanish, and students who speak Arabic, Chinese, French, and Urdu represent approximately 1% each of the EL student population.²

Monolingual English instruction is by far the most common approach to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) services in Maryland public schools. However, several LEAs have student populations that would support dual language immersion programs, meaning that there is a substantial population of English Learners who speak one language.³ Montgomery County and Prince George's County have already begun to establish dual language immersion programs.⁴

Research shows that dual language models accelerate language acquisition and improve English Learners' academic outcomes when compared to monolingual English instruction.⁵ Further, dual language immersion has benefits for all students, including stronger literacy in both languages and greater opportunities for future employment.⁶

Why Develop a Dual Language Teacher Certification?

School leaders who manage Maryland's existing dual language programs cite staffing as their greatest challenge.⁷ As the state faces a grave shortage of teachers and other school personnel, we must create more pathways for multilingual educators to enter to profession. All students will benefit when our certification process reflects the value of dual language instruction.

The measures in this bill would prepare more teachers for dual language instructional settings, promote multilingualism for all students, and provide more effective instruction for English Learners. It is time for Maryland to embrace

² Ibid, p. 18.

³ Ibid, p. 48.

⁴ Ibid, p. 49.

⁵ Ibid, p. 47-48.

⁶ Ibid, p. 47-48.

⁷ Ibid, p. 54.



innovative, research-based language acquisition models where the opportunities exist.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 56.