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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership

January 20, 2023

**Letter of Support for HB-56 – Maryland Dual Language Education - Teacher Certification, Program Implementation, and Study**

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I strongly urge you to support **HB-56 – Maryland Dual Language Education - Teacher Certification, Program Implementation, and Study** that will help implement the recommendations of the “Blueprint for Maryland’s Future: Workgroup on English Learners” that has recommended expanding dual language programs across Maryland. There is a substantial amount of research about the academic benefits of dual language programs, not only for the non-English speaking multilingual learners, but also for native English speakers who are interested in learning an additional language. Thus, this is a great education model, and we need to prepare teachers who can implement it. As well documented in educational research, over the last several decades, many great policies failed to meet the needs of diverse student populations because they lacked the teacher education component.

Indeed, no great instructional model can generate the anticipated learning outcomes for any student populations if it’s not implemented by well-prepared teachers. Without this Bill, the future of Blueprint will be no different. I can attest to this claim based on my own research. In 2016, I co-authored a paper exploring growth trajectories of 4th- and 8th-grade English learners on NAEP mathematics and reading national tests (*Journal of Educational Research*). Based on a sample of around 20,000 NAEP student data, we found that the achievement gap between non-English speaking multilingual learners and native English speakers remained either steady or slightly widened in both mathematics and reading during the years of NCLB Act (2003-2011). Our analyses of causes behind this policy failure revealed that the teacher force was not prepared to implement the new policy, which despite many shortcomings, had some good ideas about improving the system for the education of multilingual students in our K-12 system.

This bill will play a critical role in ensuring the intended learning outcomes of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future are met. As you and the committee members know, despite our need for bilingual education teachers, Maryland is amongst the 24 States that do not offer a bilingual teacher certification, which forces many of our own teacher candidates to seek this certification in neighboring states such as Delaware and New Jersey. With the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future goals in place, this is a great time to pass this Bill, and we got great universities that are ready and capable of offering this certification to make sure we support the education of the multilingual students in our K-12 system.

Our department, Department of Teaching and Learning, and Policy and Leadership is well positioned to offer this certification. In addition to being one of the largest providers of teachers at elementary, middle, and secondary levels, in numerous content areas, we also have a world-class doctoral program in Applied Linguistics that generates a significant amount of research with great pedagogical implications on multilingual language acquisition and development, teacher education for multilingual learners, and so forth. Our colleagues have created a certification program in this area, and we are ready to serve this student population and support our State to meet its Blueprint goals.

It is for these reasons that I strongly urge you to please support HB 56.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nihat Polat'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Nihat Polat, Ph.D.  
Professor and Chair