



January 20, 2023

Ways and Means Committee
Maryland General Assembly

In Support of HB0056: Public Schools- Dual Language Education- Teacher Certification, Program Implementation, and Study

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Esteemed Committee Members:

My name is Dr. Drew S. Fagan and I am Associate Clinical Professor of Applied Linguistics and Language Education, Coordinator of the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Program, and Associate Director of the Multilingual Research Center within the College of Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am also the current President of the Maryland TESOL Association. Most recently, I was appointed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Schools in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to be a member of the Workgroup for English Learners in Public Schools as part of the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, where my official member role was English learner advocate. Our [Workgroup's final report](#) was published in November 2022. Previously, I was appointed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Schools as committee member for MSDE's [Maryland American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief \(ARP ESSER\) Fund Report](#) (published 2021), the [Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education COVID-19 Response and Path Forward](#) (published 2020), and the [Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Consolidated State Plan](#) (published 2018). My roles in all of these were as English learner advocate and/or TESOL educator consultant.

For the past 22 years, I have been a member of the TESOL field in various capacities: teacher, teacher educator, researcher, language teacher association executive board member, consultant to state and federal education agencies and governments. Throughout this work, my goal, as well as that of my field, has been to ensure that English learners, regardless of their prior lived experiences (first/home language, country of origin, educational/work/familial experiences), have equitable access to education across grade levels and disciplines. Equity for all students is indeed what is at the center of both the *Maryland ESSA State Plan* and the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*. However, as the events of the last three years have highlighted, there exists pervasive inequality that our English learners deal with daily in our K-12 system. Examples of this include the COVID-19 pandemic showing certain English learner populations' lack of access to both possessing and using technology. The social justice movement has shown the struggles that culturally and linguistically diverse populations face in terms of, among other factors, getting an education that incorporates their already existing academic and language knowledge and uses that as the foundation to build upon their future education. Global political strife has led to new refugee populations entering our state, populations who bring with them unique lived

experiences unlike other immigrant and English learner populations who were already here. What needs to be done at the state level is ensuring that these issues are addressed and that our English learners achieve what the ESSA State Plan emphasized back in 2018: academic achievement and English language proficiency.

Research over the last five decades in the second language acquisition theory field has shown that increased knowledge, proficiency, and literacy in one's first language can enhance one's learning of an additional language. As an illustration¹, older English learners who are recent arrivals to the country and are on grade-level in their first/home language on average exit out of ESOL services faster and grasp academic content in English more easily; those without such first/home language knowledge struggle more with both. In my various TESOL roles over the last 10 years here in Maryland, I have worked with educators and administrators who concur with these findings based on their own anecdotal evidence with their students but continue to be frustrated with the state. They know that the ESSA State Plan emphasizes academic achievement and language proficiency for English learners, but there is currently no state-wide precedent for allowing a student's first/home language to be used and built upon as a resource to address these two overarching state-level goals. Many teachers are left to their own devices to figure how to incorporate a student's first/home language into their teaching. Simultaneously, principals and other administrators struggle with lack of state-level guidance and knowledge for how to construct, implement, and sustain such programs. This has left many in education across the state frustrated. As a teacher and teacher educator, I can tell you that this our Maryland teachers are some of the most dedicated to ensuring that their teacher practices are guided by theory and research; they do not want to do anything halfway that could jeopardize their students' current and future success. Knowledge of how to properly implement and teach learners from a dual language perspective is essential to this happening, and it must start at the top.

HB0056 is a clear way to help address this issue by providing an outlet for teachers to address the state-level goals for English learners as stated in ESSA. The bill would do this by enacting key recommendations that have been proposed by the MSDE *Blueprint's Workgroup for English Learners in Public School's Final Report*. Specifically, HB0056 would enact two overarching recommendations from the Workgroup's report. The first is Recommendation 3, Implementation of Instructional Programs to Support English Learners, and its three sub-recommendations: 3a- scaling two-way immersion programs, 3b- literacy instruction aligned to the Science of Reading that meets the needs of English learners, and 3c- Effective English Language Development (ELD) programs. The second is Recommendation 5, Teacher Preparation Policies to Support English Learners, specifically sub-recommendation 5b: Maryland Bilingual Teacher Certification and Recommendation. These two recommendations came about after more than a year of collaborations and workshopping between Workgroup members and state education agencies from states who already have bilingual education and bilingual/dual language teacher certification. Effective instruction for our English learners can take many forms; dual language education is one which research in the second language acquisition field and educational practice in other states have verified works well to meet English learners' needs. What is missing at this point is enactment by the State legislature to allow this possibility to come to fruition. To help ensure that Maryland's children's success, please vote to support HB0056.

¹ As an example with secondary English learners, see Freeman & Freeman (2009), *Academic language for English language learners and struggling readers*. Heinemann.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Drew S. Fagan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a distinct "F" at the end.

Drew S. Fagan, Ed.D.