



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 56- PUBLIC SCHOOLS- DUAL LANGUAGE ELEMENTS- TEACHER
CERTIFICATION, PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION, AND STUDY

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

JANUARY 24, 2023

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Dual language education offers a multitude of benefits for students. These programs lead to superior academic achievement, promote multilingualism, and bring the multiple benefits of integration across linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic levels.

These programs are a vital piece of Maryland's public education system because they support three types of students.

- English Language Learners who do not yet speak any English.
- Students who are bilingual or multilingual and have been exposed to English since birth, but are still mastering grammar, spelling, and comprehension in those languages.¹
- English-speaking students who wish to acquire a second language.

In Maryland, these programs are necessary. There are over 98,000 English Learners in our state.² Over the past ten years, this number has increased by 95%³ and is projected to continue to increase. The overwhelming majority of students in this population speak Spanish in their homes and are Elementary students. Yet, these diverse student

¹Gándara, P. and Escamilla, K. (2017). Bilingual Education in the United States. In Book: Bilingual and Multilingual Education, pp. 439-452. from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312265592_Bilingual_Education_in_the_United_States

² Maryland State Department of Education. (2022). The Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools. [PDF] Retrieved January 14, 2022, from

https://blueprint.marylandpublicschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/11/Workgroup-on-English-Learners-in-Public-Schools_Final-Report_2022.pdf

³ Maryland State Department of Education. (2020). EL Data for the 2019-20 School Year. [PDF]. Retrieved January 15, 2022, from

https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/English-Learners/ELGlance/2019-2020_ELData.pdf

communities are present in every county in Maryland and represent a number of languages and grade-levels.

The U.S. Education Department reported a shortage of teachers who are prepared to teach bilingual education courses in Maryland schools based on data for the 2021-2022 school year.⁴ However the Blueprint Comprehensive Plan submitted to the Maryland General Assembly this passed December (2022) by the Accountability and Implementation Board presented solutions for this problem. Primarily, it is important to “increase the rigor of teacher preparation programs and licensure requirements” and make sure all teachers are prepared to serve English Learners.⁵

This legislation establishes three state-wide initiatives for Maryland’s bilingual teachers:

1. A certification program for dual language teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools;
2. Guidelines for ongoing professional development for dual language teachers and
3. Guidelines for the implementation of dual language programs in public schools.

A state-wide, high quality, bilingual teacher certification program will support the needs of all stakeholders involved in the education of our diverse student communities. It will support schools by building a force of teachers who are prepared to deliver rigorous bilingual instruction. It will also support students and families who desire these necessary and coveted programs.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 56.

⁴ Sánchez, V.G. (2021, November 7). As numbers of multilingual students rises, finding teachers for them becomes a priority. *Washington Post*.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/11/07/english-language-teachers-towson/>

⁵ Maryland State Department of Education. (2022). The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future: Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools. [PDF] Retrieved January 14, 2022, from https://blueprint.marylandpublicschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2022/11/Workgroup-on-English-Learners-in-Public-Schools_Final-Report_2022.pdf