



## **HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

### **House Bill 807**

### **Education - Teacher Preparation Programs - English Language Learner Teacher Competency Requirements**

**February 25, 2026**

### **Information**

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 807. The bill would require teacher preparation programs to include specific English Language Learner (ELL)-related teacher competencies across coursework and, beginning in the 2028-2029 academic year, mandate at least one standalone three-credit course in teaching English language learners.

The University System of Maryland (USM) is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution. The USM fully supports preparing teachers to effectively serve multilingual learners and linguistically diverse communities.

Under COMAR 13A.07.02, approved educator preparation programs must ensure candidates demonstrate competency in differentiation of instruction, cultural competence, instructional strategies to support diverse learning, data-informed instruction, and clinical experiences that prepare candidates for diverse school contexts. In addition, the Maryland Professional Teaching Standards (MPTS) require teachers to demonstrate knowledge of students, including linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and to implement equitable instructional practices that support language development and academic achievement.

National accreditors, including the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), likewise require educator preparation programs to provide evidence that candidates can teach diverse P-12 learners, including English learners, and can apply research-based instructional strategies to support language acquisition within content instruction.

Because of these mandates, English language development, equitable literacy practices, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, and family engagement are already embedded throughout teacher preparation curricula across USM institutions. Candidates must demonstrate competency in these areas multiple times and across clinical and content settings prior to recommendation for licensure.

USM educator preparation programs intentionally embed English learner–related competencies across coursework and field experiences. Rather than isolating language development into a single class, candidates apply language acquisition theory within literacy methods courses; integrate scaffolding strategies in mathematics and science methods; practice culturally and linguistically responsive classroom management; and engage in supervised clinical practice in diverse classrooms.

This distributed model reinforces enduring learning by presenting competencies in multiple instructional contexts. Research in teacher education consistently demonstrates that repeated application across settings strengthens retention and transfer to classroom practice. A standalone course, while well-intentioned, risks compartmentalizing knowledge that is most effective when integrated into authentic teaching contexts.

House Bill 807 would require, beginning in 2028–2029, at least one three-credit course dedicated to teaching English language learners. USM undergraduate teacher preparation programs are intentionally designed at or near 120 credits to align with statewide mandates, affordability goals, and national best practices. Adding an additional three-credit requirement may extend time to degree, increase tuition and debt burden for students, and create scheduling conflicts with already tightly sequenced programs like those in secondary STEM and special education licensure areas.

At a time when Maryland continues to address teacher shortages and workforce development priorities, policies that increase cost or time-to-completion warrant careful consideration.

### **Recommendation**

USM respectfully suggests that the General Assembly consider affirming existing MSDE regulatory authority already embedded in COMAR and accreditation standards rather than mandating a specific credit structure in statute.

We support continued collaboration with MSDE, the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board, and the Accountability and Implementation Board to ensure that educator preparation programs maintain high standards for preparing teachers to serve multilingual learners effectively. We believe the current embedded competency model provides rigorous, repeated, and contextually meaningful preparation without creating unintended barriers to degree completion.

The USM appreciates your leadership in strengthening Maryland’s educator workforce and welcomes continued dialogue on this important issue.



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