

My name is Dr. Alexandra Tyukavina, and I'm testifying in favor of the HB 807 to include at least one 3-credit English Language Learner-related course into college-level Teacher Preparation Programs.

English is not my first language, and I know firsthand the difficulties that multi-lingual learners face. The language you speak shapes the way you think, the concepts you operate with. For example, in my native language there is no single word "to smell", we say "to feel smell", or there are no separate words for fingers and toes. Teachers working with multilingual students should be aware of potential learning difficulties and communication barriers.

My daughter is a 1st grader attending a public school in Maryland District 21. She is fully bilingual, because she attended an English-language daycare and preschool, even though we speak a different language at home. She did not need formal English Language Learner support when she started Kindergarten. However, many of her multi-lingual classmates did benefit from the ELL instruction. Kids in my daughter's class speak at least 5 different languages at home. And I think that language diversity in Maryland's public schools will only increase with time. Even when all these kids do not need formal ELL support anymore as they become fluent in English, it will still be beneficial for teachers working with them to have basic ELL-related training, for example, to effectively communicate with the parents.

I support this bill, because it strengthens the Blueprint for Maryland's Future's Pillar 2 focused on preparing high-quality and diverse teachers. It also aligns with the vision for preparing global citizens and increasing cultural awareness in our schools.