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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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HB807

**EDUCATION—TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS—ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LEARNER TEACHER COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS**

FAVORABLE

FEBRUARY 23, 2026

GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIR WILKINS, VICE CHAIR FELDMARK, AND HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE.

FOR THE RECORD MY NAME IS DELEGATE MARY LEHMAN, AND I AM HERE IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 807, EDUCATION—TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS—ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER TEACHER COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS.

HOUSE BILL 807 REQUIRES PUBLIC HIGHER-EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND WITH EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS TO IMPLEMENT A THREE-CREDIT TEACHER PREPARATION COURSE AT THE START OF THE 2028-2029 ACADEMIC YEAR TO ENSURE BASELINE COMPETENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STUDENTS.

THIS BILL WOULD END THE OVER-RELIANCE ON ESOL TEACHERS AS THE SOLE PROVIDERS OF LANGUAGE SUPPORT, ENSURE THAT MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS HAVE ACCESS TO RIGOROUS CORE INSTRUCTION IN THE FUTURE RATHER THAN BEING

EXCLUDED FROM IT, AND IMPROVE LONG-TERM OUTCOMES IN ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

MARYLAND IS A STATE ENRICHED BY LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY. MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS NOW MAKE UP APPROXIMATELY 12 PERCENT OF OUR TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT, AND ACCORDING TO [TRENDS IN MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER ENROLLMENT](#), THEY ARE THE FASTEST-GROWING STUDENT POPULATION IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THIS GROWTH IS OCCURRING AT A RATE FASTER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE, AND MARYLAND RANKS AMONG THE TOP HALF OF STATES IN THE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS RECEIVING LANGUAGE-ASSISTANCE SERVICES.

YET THE OUTCOMES FOR THESE STUDENTS SHOW THAT OUR CURRENT SYSTEM IS NOT MEETING THEIR NEEDS. MARYLAND SCHOOL REPORT CARD DATA ([MARYLAND SCHOOL REPORT CARD](#)) SHOW THAT

- PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IS 6.3 OUT OF 10 IN ELEMENTARY (MEETING ANNUAL GOALS), 1.8 OUT OF 10 IN MIDDLE (NOT MEETING ANNUAL GOALS), AND 2.5 OUT OF 10 IN HIGH (NOT MEETING ANNUAL GOALS)
- MATH PROFICIENCY FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS IS 17% IN ELEMENTARY, 4.4% IN MIDDLE, AND 3.7% IN HIGH (NOT MEETING ANNUAL GOALS AT ALL 3 LEVELS)
- AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY FOR MLS IS 23.8% IN ELEMENTARY, 16.5% IN MIDDLE, AND 12.2% IN HIGH (NOT MEETING ANNUAL GOALS AT ALL 3 LEVELS)

AS MARYLAND MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS PROGRESS FROM ELEMENTARY TO MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL, THEY ARE PROGRESSIVELY FALLING MORE BEHIND IN REACHING ANNUAL GOALS, NOT ONLY IN ENGLISH PROFICIENCY BUT ALSO IN OTHER CORE CONTENT AREAS LIKE MATH.

I AM HERE TO SPEAK IN SUPPORT OF STRENGTHENING MARYLAND'S EDUCATOR PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS SO THAT ALL TEACHERS ARE PREPARED TO SERVE OUR

MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS BY ADDING TO THE EDUCATION MAJOR CURRICULUM ONE THREE-CREDIT CLASS IN TRAINING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER–RELATED TEACHER COMPETENCIES.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE DUALY IDENTIFIED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION OR AT LOWER LEVELS OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY, ARE TOO OFTEN TRACKED OUT OF RIGOROUS, CREDIT-BEARING CORE COURSES. THE RESULT IS THAT STUDENTS LOSE ACCESS TO THE VERY COURSES THAT BUILD GRADUATION READINESS AND COLLEGE AND CAREER PATHWAYS.

MARYLAND HAS TAKEN IMPORTANT STEPS. Maryland Law (Code, State Government §10-1101-110).6) REQUIRES FREE ORAL LANGUAGE SERVICES AND THE TRANSLATION OF "VITAL DOCUMENTS" INTO LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY LARGE POPULATIONS TO ALLOW INDIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP) TO ACCESS PUBLIC SERVICES. WE HAVE ALSO EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH THE CALL ACT.

HOWEVER, MARYLAND IS STILL BEHIND MANY OTHER STATES WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING GENERAL CLASSROOM TEACHERS EQUIPPED. AT LEAST THIRTEEN STATES, INCLUDING VIRGINIA, DELAWARE, PENNSYLVANIA, FLORIDA, AND CALIFORNIA, REQUIRE EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC TRAINING IN TEACHING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS. IN SOME STATES, ALL TEACHERS MUST DEMONSTRATE COMPETENCY IN MAKING GRADE-LEVEL CONTENT ACCESSIBLE TO STUDENTS DEVELOPING ENGLISH. MARYLAND CURRENTLY REQUIRES THIS COURSEWORK FOR ESOL SPECIALISTS, BUT FOR GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IT IS TYPICALLY OPTIONAL OR LEFT TO DISTRICT-LEVEL DECISIONS.

THAT MEANS A NEW TEACHER IN MARYLAND CAN ENTER A CLASSROOM WITH MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS AND HAVE HAD LITTLE TO NO FORMAL PREPARATION IN SECOND-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OR METHODS TO SUPPORT MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS' PROGRESS.

IF WE WANT DIFFERENT OUTCOMES FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS, WE NEED TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF EVERY TEACHER WHO WILL SERVE THEM. THAT IS WHY HB807 REQUIRES PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MARYLAND WITH EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS TO INCLUDE A DEFINED NUMBER OF CREDITS IN MULTILINGUAL LEARNER OR ESOL-FOCUSED COURSEWORK FOR ALL TEACHER CANDIDATES.

OUR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS ARE NOT A TEMPORARY POPULATION. THEY ARE MARYLAND STUDENTS, MARYLAND GRADUATES, AND MARYLAND'S FUTURE WORKFORCE. WHEN THEY THRIVE, OUR ENTIRE STATE BENEFITS. FOR THESE REASONS I RESPECTFULLY ASK THE COMMITTEE FOR A FAVORABLE REPORT ON HB807.