

HB 2056 & -1's: Access to Linguistic Inclusion
House Education Committee
February 2, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Weber, Vice Chair Neron, and members of the committee, I am Toshiko Maurizio the Administrator for Multilingual Programs in the Beaverton School District. Under "Multilingual Programs" I oversee the Title III program serving emergent bilinguals as well as our dual language programs. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 2056 and the dash 1 amendment. Our goal with HB 2056 is to **advance research-based and equitable language policies for Oregon youth.**

From June 2019 to July 2020, I co-facilitated the emergent bilingual visioning committee together with Dr. Mary Martinez-Wenzl in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Education and the Coalition of School Administrators (COSA). Through this visioning committee, we worked with stakeholders throughout the state to develop a long-term vision for serving the state's 102,786 emergent bilingual students. In Beaverton, specifically, we serve about 4,800 emergent bilinguals (2nd largest in the state) speaking over 103+ languages.

The committee's work also included the development of key recommendations for evidence-based policies that work to advance equity for our emergent bilingual students. There were several policies we discussed but HB2056 and the dash 1 amendment rose to the level of critical importance for the committee and we are excited it is being heard by this committee.

From a former principal and now a district administrator perspective, **the current diploma requirements have resulted in structural barriers for our high school English Learners** (emergent bilinguals). First, many of our students started schooling in their home countries and then enrolled in our schools with a transcript. Because current policy calls out "English" in a language arts course, many of our students that took language arts courses in their native countries are not able to transfer those credits. This is a significant barrier and does not align with our vision of honoring and valuing a student's first language and culture. Second, about 48% of our English Learners are currently in dual language programs in our district. Research has shown that dual language programs are the most effective model for English Learners (Goldenberg, 2008, 2013; Greenberg, Vazquez & Holmgren, 2019; Steele et al., 2017; Thomas & Collier, 2004, 2015; Umansky, Valentino, & Reardon, 2015). However, students in our dual language programs have to take English Language Arts on top of their Spanish Language Arts courses just to meet diploma requirements. Both of these courses use the same learning targets and teach the same literacy skills just in a different language and with different classroom libraries. Additionally, a well-designed dual language program and well-trained dual language teachers use

bridging techniques (Beeman & Urow, 2012) to help students with cross-linguistic transfer from one language to another, which is supported by research (Chuang, Joshi & Dixon, 2011). Therefore, this is an unnecessary barrier that if removed could open up doors and opportunities for our English Learners in these programs.

From a global perspective, we understand that as a district, we are responsible for preparing our students for beyond a PK-12 system. **This will require that students develop multilingual reading, writing, speaking, listening, calculating, viewing, and critical thinking skills in the centuries to come.** Any policy that advances multilingual learning both recognizes the linguistic assets of students who are multilingual and helps these students preserve that first language. More importantly, research coming out of the field of neuroscience supports the claim that a multilingual brain is very different than a monolingual brain (Higby, Kim, & Obler, 2013) and that multilingual students consistently outperform their monolingual peers academically (Steele et al., 2017). A possible explanation could be that when students are learning content and concepts in more than one language, these students are building and strengthening neural networks which allows for the process of inhibition and integration to take place, which also strengthens their ability to take on higher order levels of cognitive tasks (Lenneberg, 1969; Poeppel, Emmorey, Hickok, & Pylkkanen, 2012; Pulvermüller, 2003, 2012).

The changes put forward through HB 2056 and the amendment are grounded in research, common sense, will prepare students for a global society, and will advance equity for Oregon students. I urge your support of HB 2056 and dash 1 Amendment.

Respectfully,



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