



Graduate School of Education & Information Studies  
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March 1, 2021

To: The House Education Committee  
RE: HB 2056 & -1's: Access to Linguistic Inclusion

I am Patricia Gándara, professor of education at the University of California, Los Angeles and co-director of the UCLA Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles. For more than 40 years, I have dedicated my research and teaching to educational equity and access for low income and students of color, language policy, and the education of Latino/a youth. I am also an elected member of the National Academy of Education.

I am writing to express my support for Oregon's HB 2056, which represents an important step forward for more linguistically inclusive high school diploma requirements. The bill will provide much-needed flexibility for Oregon students, and particularly for immigrant-origin students who are English learners in high school.


If it passes, this bill will make Oregon a major leader, at the national level, in multilingual education. I am excited to see this kind of forward-thinking, asset-based policy making in our neighboring state. I am hopeful that it sets a standard for other states, including California.

As a professor at a major research university, I recognize the importance of ensuring that high school diploma requirements support students to meet university admissions requirements. I am also acutely aware of the critical importance for lifetime outcomes for all our students to graduate high school with a diploma that paves the way for their next educational stepping stone. Over the past several years, there has been a tremendous push to align high school diploma standards with the admissions requirements for four-year colleges, and ensuring that all students graduate "college ready."

Requiring all students to meet a four-year college admissions standard designed for monolingual English speakers, however, can unintentionally result in steering some of our most vulnerable students - English learners and immigrant students - away from earning a standard diploma. These students will benefit tremendously from more linguistically inclusive diploma requirements that also demonstrate their language abilities. We now know that skills students possess in one language are fundamentally transferable to all languages an individual acquires. These immigrant and English learner students deserve recognition of their linguistic skills and knowledge.

I am confident that the Oregon Department of Education will work closely with the higher education community during the rulemaking process to ensure the new revised diploma requirements are clear and support all Oregon students to pursue a range of postsecondary options. At the same time, this will provide a strong incentive for immigrant and English learner students to work hard to complete their high school diploma, raising the average completion rates for the whole state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Gándara', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Patricia Gándara, Ph.D.

Research Professor and Co-Director  
Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles