



Multistate Association for Bilingual Education – Northeast, Inc

An educational nonprofit promoting multilingualism, equity and social justice in communities

June 23, 2023

Dear House Chair Garlick, Senate Chair Lewis and other members of the Joint Committee on Education,

On behalf of the Multistate Association for Bilingual Education, (MABE) and MABE’s Working Group on School Accountability, we would like to express support for bills H 549 and S 311: *An Act Relative to Educator Diversity*. We urge you to report this bill favorably out of Committee.

This comprehensive bill would increase the recruitment and retention of educators of color by providing multiple pathways to certification, improving data transparency and hiring bias training, as well as elevating the voices of educators of color through Educator Diversity Councils. Research shows that a key factor holding back students’ potential is that the adults throughout our education system do not mirror the demographics of our schools. Creating mirrors and windows in the classroom also attracts more students of color to pursue a career in teaching, diversifying the educator pipeline from the earliest stages of recruitment.

MABE has been providing technical support to districts implementing the LOOK Act and the Student Opportunity Act. The goal of expanding more equitable opportunities for our English Learners is not happening as was intended with the LOOK Act simply because Dual Language Education (DLE) programs are not being implemented. MABE conducted a survey and interviewed leaders in districts to learn about the barriers they face and perceived obstacles for considering DLE programs. A recurring concern we heard from district leaders was difficulty in recruiting and hiring qualified bilingual staff. *An Act Relative to Educator Diversity* presents an opportunity for breaking down the “STAFFING” barrier to implementing new DLE programs. One consequence of Question 2, when Sheltered English Immersion programs were mandated in 2002, has been that the Commonwealth has a small pool of diverse staff available today (those who are proficient in languages other than English and are trained in dual language education).

Certification continues to be a barrier for new educators entering the field, **for licensed educators for other states and countries**, and for teachers seeking to renew their licenses. We share with you the story of one of our leaders in Dual Language Education who has experience barriers to licensure:

“While data shows that students experience better outcomes when they are surrounded by educators who reflect their culture and experiences, diverse educators face disproportionate barriers in entering the profession—such as hiring bias and challenges passing the MTEL. Our Dual Language programs rely on our Spanish teachers. Our Spanish teachers teach the Spanish component of the program and are expected to only speak in that language just as we have English teachers that only teach the English component of instruction. We could not have Dual Language Programs without Spanish teachers. In order to show that we value and respect their professional expertise, we should validate and accept their teaching licenses from Puerto Rico and have easier avenues for teachers from other countries to obtain licensure. It is not a requirement for our Spanish teachers to be completely fluent in English in order to get a job as a Dual Language Teacher, just in the same way we do not require our English teachers to be fully fluent in Spanish to get a job with us either. They should have the opportunity to take the MTEls in their native language and the language they are being expected to teach in. Furthermore, 19% of educators of color leave the classroom annually at the national level. Lack of diversity planning and cultural competency act as contributing factors to these retention rates. Therefore, the Educator Diversity Act would address barriers across the entire educator pipeline, from recruitment to retention, while also creating uniformity across the Commonwealth.”

Currently, over 14,000 educators in the Commonwealth hold an emergency license, representing a significant pool of diverse educators who would benefit from multiple certification pathways. Creating multiple pathways to certification decreases these barriers to recruitment and retention, while maintaining highly-effective teachers in the classroom.

MABE recommends the following revisions to strengthen the language of the bill:

- **Explicitly eliminate licensure barriers by articulating (and requiring DESE to consider) flexible approaches to teacher license.** Examples of flexible approaches include:
 - Revisiting reciprocity policies and procedures with other states and countries
 - Create more inclusive opportunities, especially clarify/include Institute of Higher Education (IHE) in Puerto Rico that are nationally accredited
 - Recognizing course work if taken at other IHE's, especially in IHE's outside the four MA accredited teacher prep programs for DLE and in IHE's internationally
 - Revisiting and extending temporary and initial teacher licenses while demand for bilingual/bicultural staff is high and while trying to increase the number of DLE programs in districts with the highest % of ELs and students from minority groups. (Note: examples of extending temporary license to 3 years (now 1 year); preliminary (initial) license now requires teacher prep program, a M.Ed. and 5 years to full licensure)
 - Providing funding to IHE's and other supporting organizations such as MABE to assist with developing the competencies and skills of bilingual/bicultural educators
 - Revisiting the assessment policy and procedures for licensure: purpose, quantity, cost. For increasing staff to DLE program offering the MTEL assessment in a language other than English for those teachers teaching in the program's partner language or accepting a competency-based portfolio aligned with the National Dual Language Education Teacher Preparation Standards (NDLETPS) or graduating from an IHE where the language of instruction is English would exempt a candidate from taking the Communication and Literacy test.
 - Provide scholarships for bilingual teacher candidates to take the MTELS
 - Provide MTEL preparation/tutoring programs for bilingual teacher candidates whose first language is not English.
- **Require DESE to collect data on language of staff** - a critical element of diversity for DLE/Bilingual programs (LOOK Act & Educator Diversity Act)
- **Require that diversity measures begin at DESE** where diverse people with experience and knowledge of the variety of bilingual programs available at the state should be in positions of leadership.

As a Commonwealth, we have an opportunity to ensure we are building the next generation of diverse educators who can transform the experience of students of color by passing the Educator Diversity Act this session. Students of color are the future of the Commonwealth and ensuring their success in the classroom requires systemic changes to the educator pipeline. We urge you to report this bill favorably out of committee for consideration by the full state legislature.

Respectfully,

Phyllis Hardy, Executive Director, MABE