



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**

**SB 389 Public Schools – Dual Language Education – Teacher Certification, Program
Implementation and Study**

POSITION: Support

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. LWVMD supports programs and reforms that promote equal access to quality education and ensure students have access to well trained teachers. In addition, the League of Women Voters is committed to [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) in principle and in practice. SB 389 meets these priorities.

LWVMD supports SB 389 Public Schools – Dual Language Education – Teacher Certification, Program Implementation and Study which requires the State Board of Education (MSBE) and the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) to develop regulations for the certification of dual language teachers in public schools and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop guidelines for the implementation of dual language immersion programs in public schools.

Given the growth of the English Learner population in Maryland and the proliferation of dual language programs, there is a clear need for well-prepared dual language education teachers and the development of implementation regulations and guidelines.

This bill will support the services needed to address the learning needs of the growing population of English Learners (EL) in the state. The enrollment of English Learners in Maryland increased from 6.5% in 2013 to 11.7% in 2022. While the distribution of EL students is not evenly distributed across the state, the EL student enrollment increased in every Maryland school district. Disparities exist in learning outcomes (graduation, dropout rates, and attendance) of EL compared to their peers. On average, EL students underperform their English-speaking peers across the state.

[Empirical studies](#) show that well implemented dual language programs gradually and steadily close the achievement gap between emergent bilingual children and their monolingual English-speaking counterparts. Dual language education is widely supported by research as a

highly effective additive bilingual education approach that is associated with significant academic and linguistic benefits as well as amplified sociocultural and socioemotional competencies, or what might be called 21st century skills. In addition, dual language programs provide English speakers the opportunity to learn another language and acquire cultural competency; they offer dual language learners support in both languages. Establishing implementation guidelines and regulations will provide schools and districts guidance while allowing local flexibility to develop and implement dual language programs.

Dual language program effectiveness depends heavily on qualified educators with highly specialized preparation. The bill requires the development of teacher certification standards based on the “[National Dual Language Education Teacher Preparation Standards](#).” These standards draw from theory, research, and practice on educator preparation and dual language program effectiveness. They provide guidance and flexibility as the State develops clear, effective, and applicable dual language teacher preparation standards that are appropriate for a variety of dual language/immersion models.

Establishing certification standards for teachers and guidelines for the implementation of dual language immersion programs will help the State meet the challenge of providing quality dual language programs.

We urge a favorable report on SB389.