



Removing Linguistic Barriers for Parents Will Improve Outcomes for Multilingual Learners

Testimony in Support of House Bill 127 (2023) Presented by Mikayla Arciaga, M.A.Ed., to the Georgia House Education Subcommittee on Curriculum, February 12, 2024

Good afternoon, Chairman Ballard and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Mikayla Arciaga, M.A.Ed., and I am the Georgia Director of Advocacy at IDRA, an education policy and advocacy organization committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools. We have over 50 years of experience in advocating for the rights of multilingual learners across the southeast to access equal education opportunities and are here in support of HB 127.

With over 127,000 students, Georgia has the sixth largest population of multilingual learners in the country (GOSAA, 2023; NCES, 2020). Multilingual learners have one of the lowest graduation rates of any subgroup of students in Georgia, second only to students who are homeless (GOSAb, 2023). This should not be taken as a characterization of our students but should spark reflection about how we serve our students.

We know that family engagement is a key indicator for student success, but many of our parents face linguistic exclusion from their students' school, and the incredibly nuanced and complex process of IEP evaluation. At a time when parents' rights are at the forefront, it is exciting to see legislation that moves the conversation forward for Georgians who have long been overlooked. We believe that this bill will help to eliminate a barrier for a particularly vulnerable group of our students and their families and empower more families to navigate our school and encourage you to vote Do Pass.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. For more information, please contact mikayla.arciaga@idra.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Resources

Governor's Office of Scholastic Achievement (GOSAA). (2023). Enrollment by Subgroup Metrics.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2020). Table 204.20: English learner students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected years, fall 2000-fall 2020. *Digest of Education Statistics* (2022 ed.)

Governor's Office of Scholastic Achievement (GOSAb). (2023). Graduation Rate (4-Year Cohort).

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.