

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
U.S. House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Rogers  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

October 24, 2022

Dear Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Rogers:

The undersigned 97 national, regional, state and local education organizations and institutions write to urge your support for the inclusion of the Biliteracy Educational Seal and Teaching (BEST) Act in the final, conferenced version of the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Specifically, we request that the Senate agree to recede to the House NDAA's authorization of the BEST Act.

The BEST Act is a K-12 educational program which, if enacted, would have significant benefits for our nation's armed forces and all students nationwide. In the nation as a whole and within the military especially, America's language capacity has reached a breaking point. According to a 2017 American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) report, only 21.7% of US residents speak a language other than English at home and "only a fraction of this cohort speaks, reads, and comprehends a second language well enough to use it in their everyday lives." This same language deficit afflicts our military, as well, and represents a real threat to the mission of the US military. Multiple GAO studies have found that our nation's language deficit could threaten our priorities and missions around the globe.

Launched in California and now adopted in 49 states, Seal of Biliteracy programs offer significant inducements for America's K-12 students to learn another language – a seal on their diploma or transcript that shows higher education institutions, employers and even the military that they have attained proficiency in English and one other language. Over 20 years of research demonstrates that proficiency in two or more languages positively impacts academic achievement, retention rates, school attendance, graduation rates, grade point averages, rates of matriculation into post-secondary education, employability, earnings, and local and national achievement test scores. These programs have the added benefit of empowering heritage and native speakers of other languages to grow their languages and cultures. Indeed, the Congressionally commissioned AAAS report saw Seal of Biliteracy programs as an important part of the solution to the language crisis and urged states to adopt such programs.

The BEST Act, which the House passed version of NDAA would authorize, directs the Department of Education to award renewable two-year grants to states to establish or improve, and carry out, Seal of Biliteracy programs to recognize student proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in both English and a second language. Further, BEST allows speakers of any official Native American language to use equivalent proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in such language in lieu of proficiency in English.

For all of these reasons, we support the BEST Act and urge you to support its inclusion in the final, conferenced version of the FY23 National Defense Authorization Act.

Sincerely,

**National Organizations**

Joint National Committee for Languages  
National Council for Languages and International Studies  
AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
ACTFL  
American Association for Applied Linguistics  
American Association of Teachers of German  
American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese  
American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS  
Association of Language Companies  
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents [ALAS]  
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)  
Avant Assessment  
Center for Applied Linguistics  
Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools  
Computer-Assisted Instruction Consortium (CALICO)  
EDGE Consulting Partners  
Fluency Consulting LLC  
Freestyle Languages  
International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT)  
Latino Leadership Coalition, Inc.  
Latinos for Education  
MARACAS/Learning Kaleidoscope  
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools  
National Association for Bilingual Education  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of English Learner Program Administrators  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Coalition of Native American Language Schools and Programs  
National Committee for Latin and Greek  
National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL)  
National Education Association  
National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations  
National School Boards Association  
TESOL International Association  
UnidosUS

**State and Regional Organizations**

The Alabama World Languages Association  
Alaskans for Language Acquisition  
Arkansas Foreign Language Teachers Association  
California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE)  
Californians Together

Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSCTFL)  
Computer-Assisted Instruction Consortium (CALICO)  
DECTFL - Delaware Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages  
Dual Language Education of New Mexico  
Florida Association for Bilingual Education  
Foreign Language Association of Georgia (FLAG)  
Foreign Language Association of Virginia  
Global Virginia  
IATLC (Idaho Association of Teachers of Language and Culture)  
IFLTA - Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Association  
Illinois Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages  
Kentucky World Language Association  
MAFLA - Massachusetts Foreign Language Association  
Maryland Foreign Language Teachers Association  
Michigan World Language Association  
Mississippi Foreign Language Association  
Missouri Dual Language Network  
Montana Association of Language Teachers  
Multistate Association for Bilingual Education-Northeast, Inc.  
New Hampshire Association of World Language Teachers  
New Jersey Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/New Jersey Bilingual Educators (NJTESOL/NJBE)  
New Mexico Organization of Language Educators  
New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT)  
Pacific Northwest Council for Languages (PNCFL)  
PSMLA - Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association  
Rhode Island College World Languages Education Program  
Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners (RITELL)  
RIFLA - Rhode Island Foreign Language Association  
SCFLTA - South Carolina Foreign Language Teachers' Association  
Southern Conference on Language Teaching  
Southwest Conference on Language Teaching  
Texas Foreign Language Association (TFLA)  
Vermont Foreign Language Association  
Washington Association for Language Teaching (WAFLT)  
Washington Association of Bilingual Educators  
West Virginia Foreign Language Association  
Wisconsin Association for Language Teachers  
World Language Initiative – Montana  
Wyoming Association of Language Teachers

### **Local Organizations and Educational Institutions**

#### *Alaska*

Anchorage School District

#### *California*

Center for Equity for English Learners, Loyola Marymount University

#### *Massachusetts*

The Amigos School, Cambridge

Kelly Elementary School, Chelsea Public Schools

New Bedford Public Schools

Potter Road Elementary School, Framingham

Salem Public Schools Special Education Department

*New Jersey*

Montclair State University, Dept.of World Languages and Cultures

*Rhode Island*

Bishop Hendricken High School, Warwick

Cape Verdean American Community Development Association of Rhode Island

Charette Charter School, Providence

Coalition for a Multilingual Rhode Island

The Greene School, West Greenwich

Narragansett High School

Progreso Latino

Providence Public Schools

University of Rhode Island

Westerly Middle School