



Oregon

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MOVING EQUITY FORWARD

HB 2056: Access to Linguistic Inclusion
House Education Committee
February 2, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Weber, Vice Chair Neron, and members of the committee, I am Jessica Ventura, Government Relations Director for the Oregon Department of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 2056. Our goal with HB 2056 is to **encourage multilingual education for our youth**.

HB 2056 revises statutes related to credits, standards, instruction, Essential Skills, accelerated college credits, and statewide assessment development and administration to update English (or English language arts) with “**language arts, which includes reading, writing, and other communication in any language, including English**” Additionally, **World Languages** is revised to mean languages “other than a student’s primary language.” HB 2056 **advances multilingual education** for Oregon students by embracing Language arts rather than strictly English as a part of core instruction and as a required part of instruction

Preparing Our Students for a Globalized World

Ensuring Oregon students are ready to thrive in an increasingly **global economy** requires preparing students to navigate multilingual environments. Research from [New American Economy](#) shows **employer demand** for multilingual employees in both low- and high-skilled positions is increasing. Rightly so, Oregon laws should be updated to encourage the implementation and expansion of **multilingual programs**. For example, [Dual immersion programs](#) aim to develop high levels of bilingualism and are widely considered the best language instructional model for English learners as well as English speakers. **Bilingualism matters**. We saw that in the recent [graduation rates](#) released by ODE. For example, non-native English speakers who successfully completed an English learner program before high school graduated at a rate of 86.1% --- 3.5 percentage points higher than the statewide average. This proves that dedicated action yields results and that speaking multiple languages improves education outcomes no matter the student’s first language.

Equitable Policy Benefits All Students

World Language credits are a critical component of a college preparatory course schedule. Oregon's current laws and policies creates **barriers for college access** for students whose primary language is a language other than English. At the moment, students who are proficient in a language other than English are **not eligible** to receive **World Language credits** for learning English. For example, the current definition does not account for an individual student's experience: a native Spanish speaker might be able to take Spanish for a World Language credit, while taking a class in English does not count.

The changes put forward by HB 2056 and the amendment allows for **greater flexibility** in meeting graduation requirements **This helps all of our students** – from our youth working against all odds to earn a diploma to students trying to fit in one more elective into a packed schedule

We do not anticipate any fiscal impact as a result of this legislation. ODE urges your support on HB 2056.

Respectfully,

Jessica Ventura
Government Relations Director
Oregon Department of Education