



Testimony Opposing HB 880 Regarding Elimination of Bilingual Education Certification, Testimony Presented before the House Public Education Committee, April 25, 2017

Dear Chairman Huberty and Committee Members,

Thank you for hearing our testimony today. The Texas Latino Education Coalition (TLEC) is a collaborative of organizations that advocates for the rights of Latino students at the local, state and national levels. The coalition was organized to focus on critical educational issues in Texas and to improve the state of education for Latino students in public schools, including equitable access to quality bilingual education programs for English learner students.

TLEC opposes HB 880 because:

1. Removing the certification requirement for teachers of bilingual education would negatively impact student learning and defeat the important purpose of bilingual education; and
2. Allowing school districts to use limited bilingual funds to pay for the salaries of teachers would seriously deplete limited bilingual education allotment funds.

TLEC recommends that instead of pursuing measures like HB 880, the Texas House should:

- 1. Adopt policies¹ that support and increase the number of high quality, bilingual-certified teachers into the Texas teacher pipeline, such as:**
 - a. Recruiting well-prepared bilingual-certified teachers who stay in teaching, and not through temporary faculty agencies.
 - b. Supporting high quality mentoring of new bilingual-certified teachers.
 - c. Creating, where necessary, and supporting high quality bilingual teacher education programs in high-need areas.
 - d. Providing scholarships for entering bilingual-certified teachers, with special focus on high-need fields and locations.
 - e. Providing resources to support recruitment incentives for experienced bilingual-certified teachers to teach in rural schools and other hard-to-staff schools and regions.

¹ Various IDRA sources and Darling-Hammond, L. (2011). *Recruiting and Retaining Teachers: What Matters Most and What Can Government Do?* (Stewart, Ohio: The Forum on Education and Democracy). <http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Darling-Hammond.pdf>

- f. Supporting increased teacher pay and benefits for bilingual-certified teachers.
- g. Supporting struggling bilingual teachers and school principals with strong, research-based professional development and mentoring.
- h. Requiring all teacher training programs (traditional and otherwise) to train teachers on cultural competency and inclusive communities.
- i. Studying teacher attrition rates and examining factors that could improve teacher retention of bilingual-certified teachers.

2. Increase the bilingual weight to 0.25, which could help provide a range of research-based services including the following:

- a. Stipends for teachers and principals with bilingual and ESL certification.
- b. Accelerated learning and high quality tutoring.
- c. Content-testing for new students entering U.S. schools.
- d. Professional development for all teachers of EL students centered on language/content learning and cultural competency.
- e. Coaching and mentoring of teachers.
- f. Local monitoring programs to ensure bi-literacy and bilingualism.
- g. Smaller class sizes.
- h. Bilingual books, supportive materials and technology, and curriculum.

Texas has strong programmatic bilingual education laws in Chapter 29, Subchapter B of the Education Code, and its recent outcomes on the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show the state's English learner students (ELs) are outperforming ELs in other states in the Southwest with anti-bilingual education laws (i.e., Arizona and California). However, having good policies that provide for bilingual education programs is only half of the duty. Implementing appropriate bilingual programs by ensuring that teachers are trained on *how* to teach ELs in their native language is equally important.

ELs bring a special talent of fluency in another language. Bilingualism can bring quite impressive cognitive, social, and academic benefits for the individual and for society.² By creating policies that value ELs' multiculturalism and that provide the tools necessary to succeed, the Texas Legislature can help prepare these students for success in the global economy, as laid out in the Texas Education Agency's mission.

Today, approximately 93 percent of Texas public school districts serve at least one EL student and EL students comprise nearly one out of every five public school students. Texas must embrace the diversity and capitalize on the benefits that EL students and families bring to our schools and communities. HB 880, however, takes us in the opposite direction. Accordingly, the Texas Latino Education Coalition urges you to vote no on HB 880.

² R. Callaghan, P. Gandara. (2014). "Contextualizing Bilingualism in the Labor Market," in *The Bilingual Advantage... Language, Literacy and the US Labor Market (Multilingual Matters, Bristol, UK)*.