



HB 2256 Creates More Ways for Teachers to Serve Bilingual and Special Education Students

IDRA Testimony for House Bill 2256, Presented by Araceli García to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 6, 2021

Dear Chairman Dutton and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Araceli Garcia, and I am an Education Policy Fellow at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan, education non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. We are in favor of HB 2256.

HB 2256 came out of a year-long initiative, the Texas Early Childhood English Learner Initiative, to identify better policies for young English learners (emergent bilingual students). During that process, we heard from administrators, teachers and experts that a certification in bilingual special education would help to better serve English learners who also have special education needs, as well as other students in both of those groups.

Strong bilingual education programs include appropriate identification and services for English learner students who also require special education supports (IDRA, 2016; Kennedy, 2019). When students receive coordinated services to address all their learning and developmental needs, they have better learning outcomes.

Texas serves the largest proportion of emergent bilingual students in the nation, yet we do not have a bilingual special education certification. Other states educating a smaller proportion of students, such as California, Massachusetts and New York, already have this option for teachers looking to serve students in need of bilingual special education.

It is important to note that this certification does not add an additional requirement for teachers. Rather, it gives teachers an opportunity to specialize through a program that would essentially prepare them for three different types of classroom settings: bilingual education, special education, and bilingual special education, thus, providing them with even more flexibility and marketability. Recipients of this certification could even serve as district-wide specialists, helping to accurately identify and serve bilingual special education students.

We recommend passing HB 2256 to support better bilingual and special education services for students.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Araceli García, IDRA Education Policy Fellow, at araceli.garcia@idra.org.

Resources

Kennedy, B. (2019). Effective Practices in Bilingual Education Program Model Implementation: A Literature Review. Austin: Texas Education Agency.

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Bilingual%20Education%20Programs%20Literature%20Review%20Jan%202019.pdf>

Robledo Montecel, M., Cortez, J.D., Cortez, A., & Villareal, A. (2016). Good Schools and Classrooms for Children Learning English: A Guide. San Antonio: IDRA. https://www.idra.org/research_articles/ell-education/good-schools-classrooms-children-learning-english/

Texas Early Childhood English Learner Initiative. <https://bilingualtexas.org/>

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. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.