

## **The Bilingual Education Seal and Teaching (BEST) Act**

**Benefits of Bilingual:** Bilingual—proficiency in at least two languages—improves student outcomes, strengthens our economy, and supports our national security.<sup>1</sup> Second languages include world languages, Native American languages, classical languages, Braille, and American Sign Language. Bilingual is a highly prized skill in national security.<sup>2</sup> Academia and industry also highly value bilingual applicants.<sup>3</sup> Evidence shows bilingual also aids students in learning additional languages.

Bilingual has numerous developmental and educational benefits for all students. Over 30 years of research demonstrates that proficiency in two or more languages positively impacts:

- Academic achievement, retention rates, and school attendance;<sup>4</sup>
- Graduation rates, grade point averages, rates of matriculation into post-secondary education, employability, and earnings;<sup>5</sup>
- Local and national achievement test scores;
- Well-being, self-esteem, and self-efficacy;<sup>6</sup> and
- Resiliency to addiction and the prevention of risky behaviors.

**Seals of Bilingual:** In states and school districts, graduating seniors receive Seals of Bilingual on their transcripts to illustrate their proficiency in two languages. Recognition of student achievement in language proficiency enables colleges and universities, as well employers, to distinguish the valuable expertise of bilingual students in both academia and the workplace. States like Hawaii, Utah, Arizona, Washington, and New Mexico have demonstrated the viability of testing and awarding Seals in all languages. Through innovative partnerships with communities and test makers, many states provide opportunities for all students to earn a Seal of Bilingual. For example, Utah and Washington both offer Seals of Bilingual in languages ranging from Spanish, to Korean, to Zuni.

**The BEST Act:** To further promote bilingual across the country, the BEST Act would authorize \$10 million to award grants to states to establish, improve, and implement Seal of Bilingual programs and expand them to include Native American languages.

**Endorsing Organizations Include:** The Joint National Committee for Languages—National Council for Languages and International Studies, National Association for Bilingual Education, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, and National Coalition of Native American Language Schools and Programs. A full list of endorsements is below.

If you have questions or your boss would like to cosponsor the bill, please email Trelaine Ito at [Trelaine\\_Ito@schatz.senate.gov](mailto:Trelaine_Ito@schatz.senate.gov), or Maile Symonds at [Maile\\_Symonds@schatz.senate.gov](mailto:Maile_Symonds@schatz.senate.gov).

<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Commission on Language Learning. *America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, February 28, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, "A National Security Crisis: Foreign Language Capabilities in the Federal Government", 112th Congress, 2nd Sess., May 21, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Shirley J. Daniel and Fujiao Xie, Coalition for International Education and the Association for International Business Education and Research for Internationalization of U.S. Education in the 21st Century, "2014 U.S. Business Needs for Employees with International Expertise", Apr. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Fox, R., Corretjer, O., & Webb, K. (2019). Benefits of foreign language learning and bilingualism: An analysis of published empirical research 2012–2019. *Foreign Language Annals*, 52(4), 699-726; Kroll, J. F., & Dussias, P. E. (2017). The benefits of multilingualism to the personal and professional development of residents of the US. *Foreign Language Annals*, 50(2), 248-259.

<sup>5</sup> Joana Jansen, Lindsay Marean, and Janne Underiner, "Benefits of Indigenous Language Learning", Eugene: University of Oregon. 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Julia Morales, Alejandra Calvo, and Ellen Bialystok, "Working Memory Development in Monolingual and Bilingual Children", *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 114 (2) (2013).

**Full List of Organizations Endorsing the BEST Act:**

- American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese
- American Association of Teachers of French
- American Association of Teachers of German
- American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL)
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
- American Classical League (ACL)
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
- Association of Bulgarian Schools in America (ABSA)
- Association of Language Companies
- Atlanta Association of Interpreters and Translators
- Avant Assessment
- California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE)
- Californians Together
- Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
- Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP)
- Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI)
- Certified Languages International, LLC
- Colorado Association for Bilingual Education (CO-CABE)
- Colorado Congress of Foreign Language Teachers
- Contoocook Valley School District, NH
- CT Council of Language Teachers
- Foreign Language Association of Georgia (FLAG)
- Foreign Language Association of Virginia (FLAVA)
- Golden Plains Unified School District
- Global Seal of Biliteracy
- Hawaii Association of Language Teachers
- Hawaii Institute for Human Rights
- Hawaii Language Roadmap Initiative
- Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
- Hudson School District, NH
- Joint National Committee for Languages—National Council for Languages and International Studies
- The Language Group LLC
- Language Magazine
- Language Testing International, Inc.
- Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (MATSOL)
- Massachusetts Foreign Language Association
- Michigan World Language Association
- Modern Language Association
- National Association for Bilingual Education
- National Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools
- National Coalition of Native American Language Schools and Programs (NCNALSP)
- National Committee for Latin and Greek (NCLG)

**Endorsing Organizations cont.**

- National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL)
- New Hampshire Association of World Language Teachers (NHAWLT)
- New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers
- Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL)
- Ohio Foreign Language Association
- Pacific Northwest Council for Languages (PNCFL)
- Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association (PSMLA)
- Rhode Island Foreign Language Association
- School of Korean, Middlebury College
- SealofBiliteracy.org
- Second Language Teaching and Research Center (L2TReC)—University of Utah
- South Carolina Foreign Language Association (SCFLA)
- Southern Conference on Language Teaching
- TESOL International Association (Formerly Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages)
- Transparent Language, Inc.
- Utah Foreign Language Association
- Vermont Foreign Language Association
- Washington Association for Language Teaching (WAFLT-WA)
- West Virginia Foreign Language Teachers Association (WVFLTA)
- Wisconsin Association for Language Teachers