

Connecticut Admistrators of Programs for English Language Learners



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Written testimony regarding proposed Bill # SB 175

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

The Executive Board of the Connecticut Administrators of Programs for English Language Learners (CAPELL) would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 175 proposed by the Commissioner, Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, and the State Board of Education in regard to establishing a Seal of Biliteracy for high school students. We support the adoption of a Seal of Biliteracy, with changes to the wording in the Bill.

The Seal of Biliteracy highlights second language ability as a key 21st century skill in academics, career-readiness, and personal endeavors. By passing this bill, you will be showing that Connecticut supports biliteracy in the global society we live in today, and that students' hard work will be recognized.

As administrators and coordinators of programs for English Learners (ELs) in Connecticut, we feel that recognizing biliteracy is a step in support of all language learners, not just those studying a foreign language. Our programs support students who enter schools in Connecticut not proficient in English, and who have varying levels of proficiency in their native language. As students gain literacy in English, literacy development in their native language is not supported in most CT schools. Often, over time, ELs lose proficiency in their native language. Gaining proficiency in English while maintaining and developing literacy in their native language is a very difficult and highly commendable task that should also be rewarded with the Seal of Biliteracy at graduation.

We urge you to keep language suggested by Commissioner Wentzell and the CSDE that supports ELs who have learned English while maintaining and developing their native language(s). Do not exclude these students by only awarding the seal "to a student who has achieved a high level of proficiency in one or more foreign languages." Please consider wording these two sections to read "... proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English."

Thank you in advance for your support. We hope we can count on you to continue your support for English Learners, as we look to join the 14 other states that have already adopted the Seal of Biliteracy for foreign language study and English Learners.

Sincerely,

The CAPELL Executive Board