

DATE: February 24, 2016
TO: State of Connecticut, General Assembly
Education Committee
FROM: Lea Graner Kennedy, on behalf of,
The Connecticut Council of Language Teachers (CT COLT)
RE: Public Testimony Regarding Bill 175



Members of the Education Committee – thank you for this opportunity to give my testimony. My name is Lea Graner Kennedy and I am representing the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers to speak in full support of the Seal of Biliteracy described in Bill #175. We are a group of over 800 world language teachers representing all areas of the State of Connecticut.

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award made by a state department of education or local district to recognize a student who has attained proficiency in one or more other world languages in addition to English by high school graduation. The recognition of attaining biliteracy becomes part of the high school transcript and diploma for these students. 14 states have already adopted the Seal of Biliteracy and many more are considering the legislation. As a group of educators who understand the importance of biliteracy to success in college, career, and life, we are thrilled that the Commissioner and the State Board of Education proposed this legislation and that the Education Committee has included it in Bill 175.

The Seal of Biliteracy benefits both students who arrive in our schools with second language ability and our students who are learning a world language for the first time in our classrooms. It encourages *all* students to pursue proficiency in at least one language other than their native language and rewards students for their *level of proficiency* or mastery of a language, rather than focusing on how many years they have studied it. As a result, it will focus school districts and teachers on the development of student language *proficiency* as a driving principle behind high quality EL and world languages curriculum and instruction. In addition, it will promote the development of *biliteracy*, in which students develop academic reading and writing skills in addition to their speaking and listening skills. The Seal of Biliteracy on a student's high school diploma will show universities and potential employers that a student has the ability to effectively communicate with people from two or more languages and cultures, both orally and in writing - certainly a key 21st Century Skill.

The Seal also has the potential to help to establish norms around language proficiency requirements of colleges and employers. Because students' "foreign language" proficiency will be measured by a set of nationally accepted proficiency guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages; K-12 school systems, universities, and businesses will be able to engage in discussions about their language needs, all using the common language of "proficiency" levels. In Europe, this has been the case for many years: job postings often include a defined proficiency level in the job description. For our students to become globally competitive, we must begin to support a K-16 vision for language learners.

Our students will benefit from language programs as well as the reward for increased proficiency offered by the new State Seal of Biliteracy movement.

As an organization, we look forward to assisting in any way we can with implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy and we are actively researching reliable measures, and other details of implementation with our colleagues from around the nation. Thank you again for your consideration of this exciting legislation and if you have any questions or need any assistance, please don't hesitate to ask.

For more information:

Learn more about the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers at

<http://www.ctcolt.org/pages/welcome.asp>

Learn about implementation of the Seal across the United States at <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/>