

Dear Commissioner Wentzell,

My name is Michelle Martino and I am a student teacher of Spanish at Lyman Hall High School in Wallingford. I attend Southern CT State University, where I will be graduating in May to pursue a career in teaching world languages. I am a strong supporter of the Seal of Biliteracy in Connecticut and I wish that you consider adopting Bill 175. In some ways, world languages are not recognized quite like math, English, and science; however, we still value and include the study of another language at elementary and secondary schools. The Seal of Biliteracy would not only motivate students to learn a world language, but reinforce the importance of the subject area. Since world languages are not seen as a core class, many young people do not value the opportunity they have, the benefits, or career paths that follow with learning another language. I believe that the Seal of Biliteracy would change that perspective; students would want to graduate and put the Seal of Biliteracy on their resumes and college applications; they would want the world to know that they are proficient in another language beyond a few classes on their transcript. As a student teacher of world languages, my goal is to ensure that students can communicate, even if not perfectly, in the target language. The grading system I follow, however, is based on accuracy. Even though my students could be understood by native speakers, their grades do not always reflect their abilities. With the Seal of Biliteracy, the focus changes from being completely accurate to being proficient enough. As a non-native speaker, I learned Spanish as my second language and such knowledge has been advantageous in my part-time jobs, study abroad, and in daily life (besides teaching). I know that second language acquisition is possible and I firmly believe that any student can become proficient in Spanish if they desire to do so. The Seal of Biliteracy is one way to inspire students to become aware of other cultures and global issues, and most importantly, citizens of the world. Overall, I think that the Seal of Biliteracy would be an incredible enhancement for the State of Connecticut, and given that 14 other states have approved the bill, I strongly support that CT becomes the fifteenth.

Thank you for your time, concern, and support with the Seal of Biliteracy. I trust that you will make a wise decision and I look forward to hearing about any results.

Sincerely,
Michelle Martino