

February 1, 2022

Dear Delegates of the Early Childhood/Innovation Subcommittee:

HB 340 is currently before the House Education Committee. I'm writing as a Virginia voter, a parent, and an educator to ask that you oppose the wording of this bill, which clearly targets world language courses: *"The Board of Education shall establish pathways to the advanced studies high school diploma, and associated diploma seals for students who successfully follow and demonstrate excellence on such pathways, that require advanced coursework in a career and technical education field such as advanced manufacturing or robotics **in lieu of world language courses** or any other required course that the Board deems appropriate."*

I certainly understand the need to differentiate educational paths for Virginia students based on their talents, interests, and goals. Creating various curricular paths for students who aspire to the advanced studies high school diploma can serve this goal. However, the wording of HB 340 unnecessarily prejudices the curriculum that might be established by these new pathways and unfairly targets courses that teach skills--communication and cross-cultural awareness--essential to all Virginians, no matter their career orientation.

All Virginians live in a multilingual and multicultural society within a global economy. When 2,100 U.S. Human Resources departments were surveyed, 93% of the respondents said they value employees able to work effectively across a range of different countries and cultures, 66% identified foreign language skills as part of the hiring process, and 41% reported a hiring preference for multilingual applicants. Career and technical education is not in opposition to the study or exploration of world languages and cultures; the two disciplines can and should work together to prepare career-ready global citizens. If one of our primary goals as a state—and as educators—is to produce highly skilled, well-rounded, and culturally sensitive individuals who will eventually become strong job candidates (technical or otherwise) who can compete with those of other states or nationalities, this bill must not pass as it is in its current state. As expressed by ACTFL (the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), learning a second or third language in the 21st century is not only beneficial, but necessary for success in life. If we want our students and citizens of the Commonwealth to become integrated in the local and world community and thus able to function in the modern global marketplace, learning another language is an essential component of any education. Language learning has been associated with enhanced problem solving skills, improved verbal and spatial abilities, improved memory function, enhanced creative and flexible thinking capacity, not to mention enhanced tolerance of individuals and groups from other cultures.

Therefore, I ask that you vote to eliminate the words "in lieu of world language courses" from HB 340.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antonia Delgado-Poust', written in a cursive style.

Antonia L. Delgado-Poust, Ph.D.
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