

January 31, 2022

The Honorable Delegate G. John Avoli, Chair
House Education K-12 Sub-Committee
Pocahontas Building, Room W437
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Re: Support for HB 1184 – Teaching Positions for English Learner Students

Dear Chairman Avoli and Members of the Committee:

The Virginia EL Supervisors' Association (VESA) is an organization that consists of more than 75 division level leaders in the field of English language acquisition from all regions of the commonwealth. VESA strives to improve outcomes for English Learners (ELs) in all that we do, from facilitating the exchange of ideas and solid instructional practices through high quality professional learning opportunities, to delivering needed scholarships for post-secondary education to ELs graduating from Virginia schools. Our collaborative efforts with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and nationally recognized experts in the field of English language acquisition have helped Virginia emerge as a leader in the national effort to strengthen instruction and services for ELs. With support from our extensive and diverse membership, VESA urges you to join us in our mission to improve outcomes for ELs by helping to pass HB 1184, sponsored by Delegate Elizabeth Guzman.

According to VDOE fall membership reports, 117,755 ELs were eligible for Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs). This is a 28 percent increase in EL enrollment over the past ten years. While this enrollment trend continues, Virginia schools must find ways to serve ELs with widely varied characteristics and individual needs, with consideration for the following:

- Prior education, or lack thereof
- Level of English proficiency
- Special Education service needs
- Giftedness
- Life experience
- Trauma

The staffing formula presented in HB 1184 acknowledges that schools need to have teachers available to provide intensive LIEP services to students beginning the process of English language development, while also serving those who are approaching full English proficiency. An example of how this plays out in the real classroom may help to clarify the needs: Recently arrived students from Afghanistan and Central America are entering classrooms where LIEP

services are already in place to ensure long-term ELs attain full English proficiency and exit the program. With ongoing enrollment of new students with unique needs, the EL/LIEP teacher must choose to:

1. Reduce minutes and intensity of services for the long-term ELs in order to give the newcomer EL students what they need, or-
2. Maintain the services for the long-term ELs and deny the newcomer ELs the minutes and intensity of services they deserve.

ELs deserve access to the same rigorous courses, enrichment programs, extracurricular activities, and educational services that are available to their peers. HB 1184 provides staffing that helps administrators and teachers optimize their schools' master schedules so that ELs have real access to the opportunities all students have without sacrificing the LIEP services they need to be successful. This not only benefits ELs, but helps all students in the classroom get what they need, when they need it.

VESA supports HB 1184 because it is the right thing to do for students, schools, and communities across the commonwealth. We hope you agree and will show your support in the Committee on Finance and Appropriations. If you have any questions or would like to hear more about this topic from VESA, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

On behalf of the Virginia EL Supervisors' Association,

Sincerely,
Roxana Bades-Muldoon, President

Cc:

Delegate Dave A. LaRock
Delegate John J. McGuire, III
Delegate Tara A. Durant
Delegate Anne Ferrell Tata
Delegate Schuyler T. VanValkenburg
Delegate Suhas Subramanyam
Delegate Michelle E. Maldonado
Delegate Glenn R. Davis

Delegate Elizabeth R. Guzman
Delegate Nadarius E. Clark
Delegate Patrick A. Hope
Delegate Mark L. Keam
Delegate Kenneth R. Plum
Delegate Sam Rasoul
Delegate Irene Shin
Delegate Marcus B. Simon