

## Opposition to HB 2341

### World Languages and HB 2341

HB 2341 would eliminate proficiency in world languages as a requirement for an advanced studies diploma. The next generation of Virginians (1) will work in international business online and in person, (2) will enter leadership positions in government agencies, (3) will address global sustainable development issues the UN identified <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

GOOGLE TRANSLATE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH:

**-Showing respect for the cultures of our partners.** Building relationships with our partners requires a respect for other cultures, and language is a critical part of other cultures -- spontaneously saying even a few words and making an effort to communicate matters.

**-Reading between the lines when not everything is said.** Understanding our partners involves communication that is over 50% non-verbal in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and world languages classrooms help students to understand and speak in high-context cultures where not everything is said.

**-Language skills in the workplace, physically and virtually.** America's business community needs to interact with customers who do not speak English, but most importantly the customer base grows when we operate more online, both with multilingual websites and with employees who can respond to emails and participate spontaneously in Zoom meetings.

**It is a mistake to take out of the advanced diploma a skill that is critical to Virginia students entering the workforce in the coming decades. Their competition is not Ohio or California, it is Canada, Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Jobs that are 50-100% remote will need employees who can work in a multilingual and multicultural environment.**

### VCU World Languages and college-level language instruction

Other nations are partnering with VCU and other U.S. campuses so that their graduates will speak English almost as well as we do, and they will have a native language and a second language in addition to English. I teach language and intercultural communication at the graduate and undergraduate levels. I work internationally and interact routinely with ambassadors, ministers of higher education, and university presidents and high-level officials in French-speaking countries, and I arranged for a high-level VCU delegation to meet with their counterparts in Morocco as recently as last November. Next week I will be hosting the Ambassador of Mali both in my role as a member of the Richmond Sister Cities Commission and a Professor in the VCU School of World Studies. In my language classes I do project based learning that requires them to interact in French or Spanish with partner institutions in French-speaking or Spanish-speaking countries. However, high schools need to get students ready to come here.

**Students working on an advanced diploma routinely work toward a Seal of Biliteracy that enables them to take third-year college courses in French or Spanish when they come to VCU.** The United States will only have a supply of the necessary employees with language skills if they start in high school when they are working on an advanced diploma.

Patricia W. Cummins, Ph.D.

Professor of French

President, Africa Business and Entrepreneurship Research Society, Inc.

Past Chair, Richmond Sister Cities Commission and Commissioner 2021-23

Project Director, VCU French West Africa Project

(804) 536-0429

[pcummins@vcu.edu](mailto:pcummins@vcu.edu)