



January 17, 2022

Dear Members of the House Education K-12 Subcommittee,

As the 2019 ACTFL Language Teacher of the Year finalist, FLAVA (Foreign Language Association of Virginia) President, a world language educator in Loudoun County, and a Virginia resident, I am horrified by House Bill 340 which would *“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”*. Career and technical education (CTE) classes cannot replace World Language classes. By doing so, you and your fellow legislators are doing a disservice to **ALL** students in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Furthermore, by allowing the substitution of CTE classes for World Language classes, you would create a system that is not in alignment with the newly approved [Virginia Profile of a Graduate](#).

House Bill 340 undermines the career and college readiness of students in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Most colleges and universities in Virginia require several years of world language study and do not allow CTE classes to replace World Language requirements. All students and therefore all college and career pathways (including computer science) need world language instruction to be successful in the job market of the 21st century.

**Foreign Language Requirements in the State of Virginia:**

<b>Virginia Colleges and Universities</b>	<b>Foreign Language Requirements</b>
Christopher Newport	Advanced Studies in HS w/ 3 units of one foreign language or 2 units of two foreign languages are strongly recommended. Specifically mentions ASL as qualifying.
College of William and Mary	Advanced Studies in HS w/ 3 units of one foreign language or 2 units of two foreign languages are strongly recommended.

George Mason University	Advanced Studies in HS w/ 3 units of one foreign language or 2 units of two foreign languages are strongly recommended.
James Madison University	Advanced Studies in HS w/ 3 to 4 units of one foreign language or 2 units of two foreign languages are strongly recommended.
Longwood University	Advanced Studies in HS with 2 years of foreign language (with a(n) additional year(s) strongly recommended).
Norfolk State University	No mention of foreign language. May be considered among the electives.
Old Dominion University	Advanced Studies in HS w/ 3 units of one foreign language or 2 units of two foreign languages are strongly recommended.
Radford University	3 to 4 units recommended
University of Mary Washington	Advanced Studies in HS w/ 3 units of one foreign language or 2 units of two foreign languages are strongly recommended.
University of Virginia	2 or more years of foreign language required.
University of Virginia's College at Wise	2 or more years of foreign language required.
Virginia Commonwealth University	Advanced Studies in HS w/ 3 units of one foreign language or 2 units of

	two foreign languages are strongly recommended.
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	Advanced Studies in HS w/ 3 units of one foreign language are highly recommended.
Virginia State University	Advanced Studies in HS w/ 2 units of foreign language recommended.

Language learning reflects the 21st century skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Students who study world languages also learn invaluable soft skills, such as interpersonal communication which involves listening and adjusting what you say accordingly ; possessing and understanding different points of view; empathy; critical thinking; and making connections across complex ideas. Recently Google announced that “The seven top characteristics of success at Google are all soft skills: being a good coach; communicating and listening well; possessing insights into others (including others different values and points of view); having empathy toward and being supportive of one’s colleagues; being a good critical thinker and problem solver; and being able to make connections across complex ideas.” (Washington Post). If one of the world’s top tech companies is placing more emphasis on the soft skills, does this not indicate the importance of language learning and the skills that world language educators are instilling in their students on a daily basis? It is not only Google that sees the importance of these soft skills fostered in the language classroom. According to NACE’s Job Outlook 2016 survey, important hireable attributes include “written communication skills, problem-solving skills, verbal communication skills, and a strong work ethic”. By placing a focus on soft skills, as well as 21st century skills, we are preparing language students to be ready for the competitive global society in which we live.

In addition to marketability, learning a language has a multitude of other benefits for students. Language learning supports academic achievement in myriad ways, including higher standardized test scores (especially in math and science), increased ability to hypothesize, and improved reading abilities (ACTFL). A 2007 study by the University of Massachusetts showed that “children who study a foreign language, even when this second language study takes time away from the study of mathematics, outperform students who do not study a foreign language and have more mathematical instruction during the school day.” Furthermore, learning a foreign language can improve literacy in one’s native language. As one takes in the grammar rules, syntax, and other complexities of a new language, one’s knowledge of the mechanics of language improve. This awareness can carry over to an individual’s first language, making them a better speaker and writer—skills whose utility cannot be denied and cannot be fostered through CTE courses.

In order for students to be successful in the global society, they need to develop a sense of interculturality. In the language classroom, students learn to understand and appreciate other

cultures and how those cultures relate to their own. Students' perceptions of the world change and they become more understanding of others. CTE courses do not afford students any opportunities to develop cultural competence. Language truly is a product of a culture, and the knowledge that comes with learning different ways of seeing the world is something that we need more of in today's society.

HB 340's current wording unnecessarily prejudices the curriculum that might be established by the new pathways, unfairly targeting courses that teach skills--communication and cross-cultural awareness--of use to *all Virginians*, no matter their career orientation. ***All Virginians live in a multilingual and multicultural society within a global economy.*** Virginia graduates are expected to "build connections and value for interaction with diverse communities," one goal of world languages courses. Moreover, all world languages courses teach students interpersonal and communication skills, essential in any workplace. Because they teach such necessary skills, I oppose any advanced studies high school diploma that does not contain world language components.

Career and technical education classes should not be a substitute for world language classes for the advanced studies diploma. I respectfully oppose any attempts to substitute CTE classes for language study, which is vigorously and uniformly rejected by those in the career and technical field and world language educators. If House Bill 340 resurfaces for a vote, I urge you to consider these facts and vote against it.

Cordially,

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