

Leveraging the Potential of New York State's Multilingual Learners:

Position Statement on the Urgent Need for Funding

New York State advocates for English language learners (ELLs)/multilingual learners (MLLs), a group of statewide educational and community-based organizations focused on the educational needs of ELLs/MLLs and their families, have together identified urgent budget priorities to support ELLs'/MLLs' education. When ELLs/MLLs receive the support they need to succeed, they actually outperform their native-English speaking peers. Given how dramatically far ELLs/MLLs lag behind—even with this year's slight improvement only 34% are graduating on time—substantial investments are needed to leverage their potential.¹

Key priority areas are:

- **Address the shortage of qualified bilingual educators – including special education teachers, school counselors, social workers, and paraprofessionals.** The shortage of qualified educators across ELL/MLL program models (Transitional Bilingual/Dual Language/ENL) and the related shortage of bilingual special education classes are the greatest challenges facing schools and districts as they attempt to effectively meet the educational needs of ELLs/MLLs and comply with NYS regulations. There is a need for financial support to design and implement high-impact strategies to identify, recruit, prepare, hire, and retain bilingual educators and bilingual support personnel across all ELL/MLL instructional delivery models in general education and special education programs in NY State.
- **Robustly fund Foundation Aid and set aside support for ELLs/MLLs.** Schools are still owed \$4.9 billion in Campaign for Fiscal Equity funding, with the majority owed to schools with high populations of minority and immigrant students. NY must urgently provide resources to bolster districts' ability to meet their legal obligations to serve ELLs/MLLs and empower their families. The funding should specifically drive support for professional development to ensure that all educators of ELLs/MLLs are prepared to fuel ELLs'/MLLs' success and offer meaningful opportunities for their parents/guardians to engage in their child's academic experiences.
- **Fuel multilingual early childhood education.** Nearly half (43%) of children age 0-8 in New York live in homes where a language other than English is spoken.² Support for appropriate MLL/Emergent Multilingual Learner identification and quality programs for the under-5 student population staffed by qualified personnel are critical to ensuring that early childhood education meets its lofty goals and can implement protocols that are age-appropriate and support multilingualism. Continuous and evidence-based professional development should also be made available for educators of MLL/Emergent Multilingual Learners prior to Kindergarten.
- **Create alternate assessments for ELLs/MLLs with severe disabilities.** Specific funding must be allocated to develop alternate assessments to measure the progress in the areas of language development, literacy and content areas for ELLs/MLLs with severe disabilities.
- **Increase Adult Literacy Education funding.** Support high-quality, community-based adult literacy instruction and close the enormous gap created by the transition to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Such an investment recognizes the critical role that the educational opportunities afforded to the parents of ELLs/MLLs play in their children's educational success. This is crucial if NYSED wants to fulfill its mission of raising the knowledge, skill, and opportunity of all the people in New York State.

¹ ["NY State Graduation Rate Data 4 Year Outcome as of August."](#) 2018. Data.Nysed.Gov. August 2018.

² Morell, Zoila. 2018. ["Bilingual Beginnings: High Impact Practices for Emergent Multilingual Learners."](#) presented at the NYSED Summer Institute, July 17.

We urge New York's elected officials to address the issues and recommendations described above. Thank you for this opportunity to share our community-based perspectives and offer recommendations in a truly collaborative spirit. For additional information regarding the views expressed in this document, please contact Claire Sylvan at claire.sylvan@internationalsnetwork.org or Kim Sykes at ksykes@nyic.org.

Signatures:

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Buffalo Immigrant and Leadership Team (BILT) - Raise the Rate Committee
Chinese-American Planning Council
Chinese Progressive Association
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
Councilman Anthony Martinez, Town of Babylon
Erie Regional Housing Development Corporation - The Belle Center
Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic Heritage Council of Western New York, Inc.
Internationals Network for Public Schools
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Long Island Immigrant Student Advocates Inc.
Long Island Latino Association
National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE)
National Association of Puerto Rican and Hispanic Social Workers
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Math Academy & Coaching Services
New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (NYS TESOL)
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