

August 13, 2021

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for AB 1363**

Dear Senator Portantino:

UnidosUS, formerly the National Council of La Raza, is the nation's largest Latino civil rights and advocacy organization and has built a stronger country by creating opportunities for Latinos for more than 50 years. Through our unique combination of research, advocacy, programs, and a national network of nearly 300 community-based Affiliate organizations, we challenge the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos in the United States. UnidosUS's California-based Affiliates include 58 community-based organizations that provide direct services to approximately 1.8 million Californians annually. Through partnerships, community investments, and state research and advocacy on housing, health, and education, UnidosUS advances opportunities for the more than 15 million Latinos who call California home.

UnidosUS is proud to support AB 1363 (Rivas), as amended July 5, 2021, which aims to take the first critical step of gathering key data about Dual Language Learners (DLLs) in the California State Preschool Program. The purpose of this data will be to help guide instruction, build on DLLs' language assets and needs, and support quality early learning.

Nearly 60% of the young child population (0–8) in California is classified as DLL, of which 1.9 million (or 71%) are Latino.<sup>1</sup> However, data on the large DLL population has not been tracked consistently or made easily accessible. AB 1363 aims to address the lack of information available on DLLs by requiring the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to create a standardized process that California State Preschool contractors can use to identify DLLs and report critical information about them (e.g., race/ethnicity, child's home language, and the language composition of the program staff). The data gathered will give teachers, administrators, and state policymakers the ability to make informed decisions on resource allocation and early learning program content.

Bilingualism has been shown to aid in closing achievement gaps, improving cognitive skills, and increasing one's competitiveness in the workforce. California's shift toward embracing bilingualism as an asset is timely as the demand for bilingual workers is growing and anticipated to increase. Therefore, since DLL students comprise such a large segment of the young child population in California, supporting the long-term academic success of DLL students is needed

to improve outcomes for all students and for the success of California’s global economy. Early, effective interventions are needed as DLL students who participate in early childhood education become proficient in English more quickly and have stronger academic performance in reading compared to those who don’t participate in early childhood education.<sup>2</sup>

UnidosUS is pleased to support AB 1363, as it proposes to support DLL students' academic and social success. If you have any questions regarding our support, please contact Viviana Martin, Policy Analyst, Policy and Advocacy at [vmartin@unidosus.org](mailto:vmartin@unidosus.org).

Sincerely,



Esmeralda López  
California State Director  
UnidosUS

cc: Assemblywoman Luz Rivas

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<sup>1</sup> Maki Park, Anna O’Toole, and Caitlin Katsiaficas, *Dual Language Learners: A Demographic and Policy Profile for California* (Washington, DC: Migrant Policy Institute, October 2017), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/DLL-FactSheet-CA-FINAL.pdf> (accessed July 2021).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Non-Regulatory Guidance—Early Learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act: Expanding Opportunities to Support Our Youngest Learners* (Washington, DC: Department of Education, October 2016), <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaelguidance10202016.pdf> (accessed July 2021).