

July 5, 2022

The Honorable Chris R. Holden
Chair, California State Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: Senate Bill 952 (Limón) – SUPPORT

Dear Mr. Chairman:

UnidosUS (formerly the National Council of La Raza), is proud to support SB 952 (Limón), as amended June 20, 2022. SB 952 supports the academic success of English learners (ELs) by expanding the number of schoolwide dual-language immersion programs. Dual-language immersion programs allow ELs and native English speakers to develop linguistic proficiency and academic achievement in English and other languages and promote cognitive development, cross-cultural understanding, and empathy. These programs are critical if California expects to adequately support EL students and prepare its students for the global economy.

UnidosUS is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization and has built a stronger country by creating opportunities for Latinos for more than 50 years. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers at the national and local levels. The UnidosUS California-based Affiliates include 63 community-based organizations that invest more than \$1.8 billion and employ more than 15,000 staff to provide direct services to approximately 1.8 million Californians annually. UnidosUS is headquartered in Washington, DC, and has an office in Los Angeles and staff in Sacramento. 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.

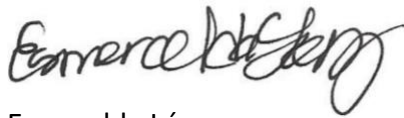
Twenty percent of California's student population are ELs, with 82% of those students being Spanish speakers.¹ Following Prop 58, which removed the restrictions to bilingual programs established under Prop 227, schools across California faced structural challenges to opening and expanding bilingual programs.² SB 952 addresses this by providing local education agencies (LEAs) with resources to create and/or expand their bilingual programs. This is necessary because while ELs have seen progress over the years regarding academic achievement, they are still graduating at lower rates than their peers; 67% of ELs graduate high school as compared to 83% of all students. Additionally, ELs have lower A–G completion rates; only 10% of ELs graduate having completed A–G compared to 47% of all students.³

Dual-language immersion programs can improve academic outcomes. Research has shown that students in well-implemented dual-language immersion programs—both ELs and native English speakers—have higher levels of academic achievement.⁴ A recent study found that the improvements for ELs who complete dual-language immersion programs are significant, performing at the same level as English-only students.⁵ Given that English learners have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, investments in programs that support their academic success should be a priority for the legislature.

SB 952 expands and creates dual-language immersion programs, specifically those targeting ELs. Under SB 952, established grants will prioritize programs with an enrollment of at least 40% ELs at the elementary school level and at least 40% ELs and reclassified fluent English-proficient pupils at the middle and high school levels. Funding will support schools' professional development, strategic planning, and ongoing support, which are proven to support successful establishment and expansion of dual-language immersion programs.

UnidosUS is pleased to support SB 952 to expand and create dual-language immersion programs as it is critical for preparing California students for a global economy. Most importantly, this legislation supports the academic well-being of English learners who have been hard hit by the pandemic. If you have any questions regarding our support, please contact Viviana Martin, Policy Analyst, Policy and Advocacy at vmartin@unidosus.org.

Sincerely,



Esmeralda López
California State Director
UnidosUS

¹ UnidosUS, "California Latino Students & English Learners Fast Facts 2020–21" (Washington, DC: UnidosUS, November 6, 2020), <http://publications.unidosus.org/handle/123456789/2098> (accessed September 20, 2021).

² Zaidee Stavely and Betty Márquez Rosales, *California bilingual programs ready to grow after slowing during pandemic*, EdSource, June 1, 2021, <https://edsources.org/2021/california-bilingual-programs-ready-to-grow-after-slowing-during-pandemic/655455> (accessed June 21, 2022).

³ The Education Trust–West, "College and Career Readiness," <https://west.edtrust.org/college-and-career-readiness/> (accessed June 21, 2022).

⁴ Amado M. Padilla et al., *Longitudinal Study of Graduates of a Spanish Dual Immersion Program* (Stanford, CA: Stanford-Sequoia K–12 Research Collaborative, January 2021), https://www.caedpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/08-BRIEF_Dual-Immersion_Final.pdf (accessed June 22).

⁵ Ibid.