



**Testimony of New York City Public Schools (NYCPS)
On the Seal of Biliteracy in NYCPS High Schools and at CUNY
Before the City Council Committees on Higher Education and Education**

October 18, 2023

Testimony of Mirza Sánchez-Medina, Chief of Multilingual Learners, Division of Teaching and Learning, NYCPS

Good afternoon, Chair Dinowitz, Chair Joseph, and all the members of the Higher Education and Education Committees here today. My name is Mirza Sánchez-Medina, and I am the Chief of Multilingual Learners for NYC Public Schools with the Division of Teaching and Learning. I am joined by Carolyne Quintana, our Deputy Chancellor of NYCPS' Division of Teaching and Learning. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Seal of Biliteracy in New York City Public Schools.

Prior to leading the Division of Multilingual Learners in 2019, I was the founding principal of Manhattan Bridges High School. I opened the school in 2003 to address the linguistic and cultural needs of English Language Learners. When the New York State Education Department established the New York State Seal of Biliteracy in 2012, Manhattan Bridges was one of the first schools to offer it, and our first cohort of students earned the Seal upon graduation in 2016. As a principal, I believed it was important to offer our students the opportunity to attain the New York State Seal of Biliteracy as a way to:

- Validate students' multilingualism as a skill, and
- Officially recognize the work and effort required to achieve proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking in two or more languages on students' diplomas and transcripts.

As the Chief of Multilingual Learners and being multilingual myself, I continue to believe that multilingualism is an asset. I know that Deputy Chancellor Quintana and New York City Public Schools leadership share this belief. This is why we are committed to working toward creating pathways to multilingualism that every New York City public school student will be able to access that culminate in their ability to attain the New York State Seal of Biliteracy.

There are a number of ways students can meet the criteria for the New York State Seal of Biliteracy in New York City Public Schools:

- Many students complete culminating projects in English and one or more World Languages to meet most of the criteria. For these students, schools may either incorporate these projects within existing courses—for example, 12th grade English or advanced World Language courses—or designate a stand-alone time for teachers to work with students on their projects.



- Students who are enrolled in a bilingual education program can use that experience toward the New York State Seal of Biliteracy.
- Other students successfully complete advanced world language courses or world language assessments and use those towards the New York State Seal of Biliteracy.
- Students who are newly arrived to the United States can use their previous coursework from outside of the United States that was taught in languages other than English to meet the world language criteria.

Our city’s linguistic diversity means that there truly is no better place than New York City to become multilingual and multiliterate.

During the 2022–2023 school year, approximately 43% of students enrolled in New York City public schools with a primary home language other than English. Approximately 17% of students enrolled in New York City public schools were identified as English Language Learners. Our ELLs alone speak more than 150 languages. Over 66% of ELLs are Spanish speakers, followed by students who speak Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Bengali, Urdu, Haitian Creole, Uzbek, French, and Ukrainian.

To successfully expand the number of students who can access and attain the New York State Seal of Biliteracy, New York City Public Schools is focused on ensuring a clear and connected pathway across our language learning programs so that all students—including English Language Learners, Heritage Language speakers, and English Proficient students—can achieve biliteracy in English and one or more world languages.

To this end, the current New York City Public Schools administration has prioritized opening new and strengthening existing bilingual education programs to support a K–12 continuum of high-quality **bilingual education**. Last year, we opened 33 new programs, and this year we supported 44 additional programs.

In addition, through the implementation of NYC Reads, we are strengthening core instruction for the 80% of ELLs served in **English as a New Language** only.

Finally, we are working with schools to scale our **World Language course** offerings, including expanding **Heritage Language** course options. Currently, New York City public schools offer World Language programs in 18 different languages citywide. In addition, a small number of schools have begun to pilot courses for Heritage Speakers in Spanish and Mandarin to offer students who already have a strong foundational knowledge of these languages more rigorous and engaging language course options.

Because of the rigorous criteria required to attain a New York State Seal of Biliteracy to demonstrate proficiency in English and one or more languages, it can be a useful indicator of the



strength of our language learning programs in building students' language skills and literacy in multiple languages.

New York City Public Schools has seen steady year-to-year growth in both the number of schools offering the New York State Seal of Biliteracy and the number of students earning the New York State Seal of Biliteracy.

Between the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years alone, there was a 26% increase in the number of students who earned the New York State Seal of Biliteracy. In the 2022–23 school year, **1,315 New York City Public Schools students graduated with the Seal in 35 different languages, with six of these students earning the Seal in more than one language.** As New York City Public Schools serves a large population of ELLs, we are especially proud that **72% of our New York State Seal of Biliteracy recipients—or 947 students total—were current or former ELLs.** This far exceeds the 26% of current or former ELLs earning the New York State Seal of Biliteracy statewide.

Testimony of Carlyne Quintana, Deputy Chancellor, Division of Teaching and Learning, NYCPS

Thank you, Chair Joseph, Chair Dinowitz, and all the members of the Education and Higher Education Committees for holding this important hearing. We are so grateful to have former educators on the Council. We are excited to talk to you about the value of this effort and acknowledge that we still have a great deal of growth to do, as well.

My name is Carlyne Quintana and as Deputy Chancellor of the Division of Teaching and Learning, I believe that it's the diversity of the students we serve in New York City that makes our system beautiful. Because of this, we know how important it is that this system affirms the racial, cultural, and linguistic identities of each child and prepares them to graduate with a plan and a pathway to a rewarding career, and long-term economic security.

In response to that charge, I launched our updated **citywide instructional priority** and call-to-action for our school system: **Every child must have a high-quality academic experience that leads to deeper learning that** includes our English language learners, our multilingual learners and our immigrant students.

How do we expect to do this? We believe we can achieve this kind of success if our teams focus in on our three levers:

- Lever #1: Schools will facilitate **mastery of core academic skills and teachers will demonstrate content expertise.**
- Lever #2: Schools will facilitate **pedagogy that prioritizes critical thinking and problem-solving skills.**



- Lever #3: Schools will facilitate a **sense of belonging and inclusivity** for all learners.

The task of meeting the citywide instructional priority is motivation for principals to develop the structures and capacities to offer the New York State Seal of Biliteracy at their schools.

While there are a number of ways for students to develop and demonstrate proficiency in two or more languages—including taking an Advanced Placement World Language course and scoring a 4 or 5 on the exam—we believe that the New York State Seal of Biliteracy stands out as a comprehensive and official credential to recognize the hard work and effort that students put forth to achieve multilingualism and multiliteracy.

We know we have more work to do to increase the number of students earning this distinction upon graduation and we are committed to growing the number of:

1. Schools that offer the New York State Seal of Biliteracy,
2. Languages in which the New York State Seal of Biliteracy is offered, and
3. Students pursuing the New York State Seal of Biliteracy as a part of their academic program, including English Language Learners and our monolingual students.

To support these goals, we will continue to focus on:

1. Collaborating with district teams to raise awareness about the New York State Seal of Biliteracy among school leaders, staff, students, and families and supporting our English Language Learners in accessing and attaining the Seal;
2. Coordinating with the New York State Education Department to ensure that schools have the resources, guidance, and support they need to offer the Seal; and
3. Partnering with CUNY to explore diverse options to leverage students' work to attain the Seal to support their success in their postsecondary studies.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about the New York State Seal of Biliteracy in New York City Public Schools today. We look forward to answering any questions you have.

**Testimony of
Alicia M. Alvero, Associate Vice Chancellor for
Academic and Faculty Affairs
before the
New York City Council
Committees on Higher Education & Education
October 18, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Dinowitz and members of the City Council Higher Education Committee and members of the Committee on Education. I am Alicia Maria Alvero, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Faculty Affairs. I am joined by my colleague from City College, Professor of Bilingual Education and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, Dr. Tatyana Kleyn.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about ways CUNY can explore translating New York State's Seal of Biliteracy into college credit. As a home to students representing more than 160 languages, CUNY is committed to expanding opportunities to benefit our diverse student population.

Earlier this month, CUNY's Chancellor announced the distribution of personalized Welcome-to-CUNY letters to all NYCPS high school seniors who are on pace to graduate in 2024. He affirmed CUNY's commitment to increase the number of college-bound students and combat the systemic inequities that are so prevalent within higher education admissions. Today's hearing spotlights opportunities for biliterate students who represent a tremendous asset to our university and city.

CUNY's Credit for Prior Learning policy, or CPL, is a mechanism that is well suited for considering awarding credit for NY State's Seal of Biliteracy. CPL, also known as Prior Learning Assessment, is an academic process that provides students with the opportunity to earn credit for college-level learning acquired outside the traditional classroom.

CUNY approved its CPL policy in 2020, emphasizing the value of recognizing all college-level learning as a means to support diverse pathways toward degree attainment. This policy aligns with CUNY's mission of offering affordable and excellent higher education to all New Yorkers.

The CUNY policy establishes nationally-normed, university-wide standards and criteria, providing both consistency and flexibility for local implementation at CUNY colleges. Faculty at each CUNY college are responsible for determining CPL equivalencies and credit awards.

The policy ensures that CPL credit, once recorded at one CUNY college, is transferable on the same basis as credits earned through regular study at that institution.

This policy also serves as an equity lever, as national data shows that students who earn CPL credit are more likely to persist, graduate, and save time and money.

CUNY's CPL policy allows colleges considerable autonomy to develop CPL programs that reflect their priorities and strengths. However, as part of ongoing CPL implementation efforts, CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs is currently working to establish flexible, centralized review mechanisms for key learning experiences that will strengthen CUNY-wide partnerships, address labor market needs, and enhance CPL's role as an equity lever.

The City Council's resolution comes at an opportune moment for CUNY's CPL work. Over the past year, the Office of Academic Affairs has been exploring the New York State's Seal of Biliteracy's potential for CPL credit, through conversations with both CUNY faculty and the NYC Public Schools' Division of Multilingual Learners and research into the Seal's criteria and rigor.

Quite simply, the Seal of Biliteracy stands out as a perfect example of a learning experience that should be evaluated in this system-driven manner: it has clear potential to strengthen partnerships with NYC Public Schools, create pathways for biliterate teachers and healthcare workers in NYC, and increase opportunities for first-generation students, immigrants, and underrepresented populations.

New York State's Seal of Biliteracy is also significant for equity reasons because it can be earned in any language, in contrast to the language proficiency exam programs named in CUNY's CPL policy, which encompass only a limited number of languages.

For all of these reasons, the university is prepared to move forward in partnership with NYC Public Schools to deliver upon the intention of the City Council's resolution, which rightly acknowledges the diversity of languages used across New York City and the breadth of potential for recognizing the Seal of Biliteracy with college credit.

CUNY has designated a portion of the \$50 million transformational funds provided by the State of New York for faculty engagement related to the evaluation of credentials for CPL credit. This funding will support the evaluation of several important credentials, including NYS Seal of Biliteracy, by CUNY faculty from multiple colleges.

The City Council's resolution calls for the awarding of college credits to students who earned the NYS Seal of Biliteracy in high school and, where required, to accept the Seal as fulfillment of any foreign language requirement. It is important to note that the specific alignment of NYSSB with curriculum will be determined by faculty. This may yield different results than specified in the resolution.

But the intention of the evaluation process is to arrive at a credit recommendation in the best interest of qualified students. The Office of Academic Affairs is developing a roadmap to inform the faculty evaluation process, and will work closely with participating faculty to ensure that appropriate equivalencies and credit awards are determined and made available to CUNY students who have earned this designation.

Additionally, CUNY will explore ways to attract and support biliterate students interested in pursuing degrees in fields that require language skills, such as teaching and healthcare. A Memorandum of Understanding with the New York State Education Department for 2023-2028 outlines CUNY's commitment to developing outreach campaigns for high school and college students, including biliterate students, to enter teacher education programs.

CUNY will also use the evaluation of New York State's Seal of Biliteracy as a stepping stone for broader consideration of the Global Seal of Biliteracy, which is available to any individual, not just high school students, to demonstrate language proficiency, potentially offering more New Yorkers the opportunity to enter CUNY with CPL credit for language skills.

Thank you for your attention and consideration, I will now pass things along to Professor Kleyn.

**Testimony of
Tatyana Kleyn, Professor of Bilingual Education
& Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
before the
New York City Council
Committees on Higher Education & Education
October 18, 2023**

добрый день, good afternoon and buenos dias Chair Dinowitz and Chair Joseph and members of Higher Ed and Education Committees. My name is Tatyana Kleyn and I greet you today in three languages: Russian, which is my home language, English a language I learned as a child refugee to the US, and Spanish a language I started learning as an adult working in Honduras. These languages, and the cultures and places connected to them, have all played a significant role in my life. They have also led me to my position as a professor of Bilingual Education and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at CUNY's flagship college, The City College of New York (CCNY).

I am honored to speak about the NYS Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) and Resolution 580 today. My path to today's hearing began when I worked with the New York State Association for Bilingual Education, and we successfully advocated for New York to become the 2nd state to pass the Seal of Biliteracy into law. Now I've gone from advocacy to implementation: recently I have been supporting 5 NYC high schools to implement the Seal of Biliteracy through the B-SEAL grant program funded by the US Department of Education.

There are important advantages of this recognition for our students. For those of immigrant origin, it validates their identity and communicates that their home language is something positive, a strength – not a problem. The Seal of Biliteracy rewards students for their language learning journeys, and all the effort they've put into being bilingual and biliterate.

But they also need recognition in terms of their academic progress toward their degree. As Associate Vice Chancellor Alvero has explained, CUNY

administration supports giving students college credit for earning the SB; alternatively, students might be waived from language requirements. So how could this work in practice for the CUNY colleges and for our students?

At CUNY as at other universities, curriculum matters require the approval of the faculty, who would have to learn about CUNY's Credit for Prior Learning policy (CPL) and the SB. Once faculty have the information they need regarding this proposal, a transparent and consistent process for evaluating and awarding credit CUNY-wide could be adopted. Faculty involvement and input will ensure that the NYSSB policy aligns with the institution's academic programs and curriculum and maintains the integrity of the educational offerings. Additionally, collaboration and communication between faculty and administration will be key to successfully implementing a system for accepting NYSSB college credit.

If these steps are taken, we can then consider the impact on students who are NYSSB recipients. At my home institution of CCNY our students have different world language requirements based on their area of study. Whether they earn credits toward major requirements, toward elective credits, or are exempted from world language requirements, students with the SB would have a head start in their program. It would also provide an avenue of financial relief as students work toward their undergraduate degree.

The Seal of Biliteracy could open up opportunities students hadn't previously considered - such as the possibility of being a bilingual teacher. This would be especially useful given the fact that we continue to have a shortage of bilingual teachers. In general, the NYSSB highlights the importance of bilingualism and biliteracy, and can bring to students' attention that there are many careers where their language practices are needed.

Спасибо, y gracias por su tiempo. It's my pleasure to explore ways that CUNY can strengthen the impact of the NYS Seal of Biliteracy, and can help make New York City not only the big apple, but the big multilingual and multiliterate apple.



**Testimony of the United Federation of Teachers before the New York City Council
Education Committee,
jointly with the Committee on Higher Education, on the seal of biliteracy**

October 18, 2023

Good morning. My name is Mary Vaccaro, and I am the vice president for education for the United Federation of Teachers. I want to first thank Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph and Higher Education Committee Chair Eric Dinowitz for their support for public education and for championing that which all children across our city need to succeed.

This is a critical historic moment, as we welcome tens of thousands of students who are arriving in our schools from countries around the world, for the children and families who rely on our public schools and for the educators who've dedicated their lives to teaching. As of March 2022, New York ranked 47th out of 50 states in graduating English language learners (ELLs), which translates to about a 36.5% graduation rate; only Nevada, Alaska and Arizona fell below this threshold. Our students deserve better. As we work to ensure that our English language learners receive the most appropriate instructional tools and resources to help them thrive, we welcome the opportunity to speak with you today about how access to the seal of biliteracy can play a role in our students' success.

The seal of biliteracy was established by the state in 2012 to recognize high school graduates in New York schools who have attained a high level of proficiency in a world language other than English. Given the incredible diversity of languages spoken in our city and our state, as well as the importance of multilingual skills in today's world, we strongly support this diploma credential as a means of ensuring that all students in our schools are supported and incentivized to develop biliteracy. In particular, ensuring that our English language learners have the opportunity to develop literacy and proficiency in their home languages as well as in English during their time in our school system is a worthwhile and important goal to strive toward as we work to support their needs.

A potential and untapped benefit of the seal is to expand the pipeline of teachers in bilingual education, an area of urgent need in educator recruitment, for our New York City

schools. One option would be to create a special program for students who get the seal and come from a minority group (similar to the NYC Men Teach program used at CUNY to recruit male teachers of color). While seal recipients would currently be too small a group to fully resolve the shortage of teachers in bilingual education, they certainly represent a pool of great potential educators who, with incentives, might go into our bilingual education programs.

Unfortunately, equity of opportunity for New York City students to earn the seal has been an ongoing area of concern. Recent data from the New York State Department of Education indicates that while the number of students earning the seal has grown, only 1,174 students in the New York City region received it in 2021–22. That same year, only 69 New York City high schools offered the seal, while 438 did not. In addition, only 8% of the students who received the seal were Hispanic, Latino or of Latino origin and only 13% were of Black or African American origin. Logically, our current and former ELLs should be more heavily represented amongst seal recipients, instead of making up a little over half of recipients as they do currently.

To increase the number of students overall who receive this credential, we believe the state and city should both aim for a higher target number of current and former ELLs to get the seal and should modify the current requirements as needed to achieve this goal. As part of this process, it is urgent to identify and address the specific reasons why our New York City students have had such limited access to this opportunity. In recent years, we have worked in partnership with Fordham University to support our members in learning about the steps to establish a New York State Seal of Biliteracy program in their schools and continue to encourage educators to expand access to this credential for their students. However, we have heard from the field that many English language learners and former ELLs do not have the opportunity to earn the seal or are unaware of their eligibility for it.

One reason is that many staff and students are unclear about the requirements for earning the credential. For example, it is possible to earn the seal without taking formal coursework in the home language, and data indicates that some students are currently getting the seal in languages like Tamil, Karen, Kizigua and others that are present in our schools but typically go unrecognized in “world language” or bilingual education program offerings. However, in one school, students taking AP Spanish were encouraged to earn the seal, while students with another home language were unaware that it could even be an option. Raising awareness that there is a direct path to gain the seal without completing formal coursework could significantly increase these numbers.

Another concern we have heard is that New York City imposes additional restrictions on the culminating “capstone” project that the seal requires. The State Education Department

offers significant flexibility around this project, but the New York City Department of Education has created a more restrictive list of requirements that have created a barrier for schools and staff who want to expand students' access to this opportunity. To give just one example, the city limits capstone projects for the seal to a short list of themes, a restriction that is unnecessary under state regulations and which needlessly limits schools' and students' flexibility in choosing projects that are tailored to their interests and needs. We recommend that the Council advocate for the city to reconsider this capstone policy and offer significantly more flexibility around these requirements.

Finally, we also have one significant recommendation for advocacy at the state level regarding adjustment to the regulations around the seal. Based on what we have heard from educators in the New York City region, a significant concern is that the current proficiency requirements for the seal over-emphasize academic language bilingualism and marginalize the actual language practices and real-life fluency of many U.S.-educated bilingual children.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the New York City Council Education Committee to ensure that our English language learner students succeed and look forward to many more of our city's students earning a seal of biliteracy in coming years.

The New York City Charter School Center
Jennifer Hall MLL/ ELL Program Manager
Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Committees on Education and Higher
Education`
Oversight Hearing on Seal of Biliteracy in DOE Schools and at CUNY

October 18, 2023

The New York City Charter School Center (Charter Center) respectfully submits the following testimony. The Charter Center thanks the New York City Council Committees on Education and Higher Education for providing the opportunity to comment on the behalf of students attending New York City charter schools.

My name is Jennifer Hall and I am the Multilingual Learner/English Language Learner (MLL/ELL) Program Manager for [The Collaborative for Inclusive Education](#), an initiative of [The New York City Charter School Center](#) (Charter Center). Thank you for the opportunity to present my written testimony.

As the multilingual learner population continues to rise across New York City in both district and charter schools, it is more important than ever for multilingualism and multiliteracy to be celebrated in our city's schools. The Collaborative for Inclusive Education hosts weekly trainings for the city's charter schools on how to serve MLLs/ELLs, centering inclusive and culturally responsive-sustaining pedagogy, including the celebration and incorporation of languages other than English in their schools. Since the New York State Seal of Biliteracy was first piloted by 20 schools during school year 2015-2016, the number of students earning the Seal remains disproportionately low compared to the amount of currently and formerly identified MLLs/ELLs in the city. While we are proud that a number of our charter high schools have stepped up to the challenge and have offered the NYSSB, we acknowledge the city's district and charter schools alike could be further embracing this initiative that supports students with home languages other than English, as well as English-speaking growing proficiency in another language. A formal resolution to ensure all New York City public high schools offer the Seal of Biliteracy, and corresponding tools and resources to support schools in the Seal of Biliteracy process, will undoubtedly help boost participation.

MLL/ELL enrollment in charter schools increased by 39% in two years from school year 2019-20 to school year 2021-22. With a growing MLL/ELL population comes increased need to celebrate, honor, and recognize the importance of being biliterate in our diverse city and, more widely, our global society. Since the introduction of the NYSBB, The Collaborative for Inclusive Education has disseminated information to charters on what the Seal of Biliteracy is and how to offer it through a variety of channels, including charter school showcases and partnership with NYSED on charter-specific trainings. The NYSSB uplifts the strengths multilingual learners bring to our communities, something to be acknowledged in our PK-12 system, as well as higher education. Given the huge percentage of New York City high school students who ultimately attend CUNY schools, including charter high school students, we further support the resolution to have CUNY reward credits to recipients of the NYSBB.

The Collaborative for Inclusive Education and The New York City Charter Center fully support Resolutions 0579 and 0580. With more widespread city requirements around the NYSSB, more resources can be put into supporting and training schools in offering the NYSSB to eligible students and support them in college and career and beyond. Until such a resolution is passed, we plan to continue advocating for more charter high schools to offer the NYSSB by disseminating the information schools need to complete the application and outline programming for students.

We would be interested in having future meetings with this committee to provide more anecdotes from the charter sector field to support the decisions the committee makes in the future regarding NYSSB requirements in New York City Public Schools. We thank you for your shared commitment to recognizing the hard work and achievements of our bilingual and multilingual students.



**The New York City Council Committee on Higher Education
Honorable Eric Dinowitz, Chair
And
Committee on Education
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair**

**City Council Hearing:
October 18, 2023**

Testimony of the New York Immigration Coalition

Good afternoon and thank you Chairs Dinowitz and Joseph and members of the New York City Council Higher Education Committee and Committee on Education. The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) is an umbrella policy and advocacy organization for more than 200 groups serving immigrants and refugees across New York State.

The New York City Department of Education must ensure that the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) is awarded to students in our education system who come from diverse backgrounds and speak languages other than English. According to the 2022 New York State of Biliteracy Report, only 8% of Hispanic or Latino students were awarded the seal of biliteracy, while 30% of White students received the award. This glaring disparity emphasizes the extent to which immigrant students lack recognition for their linguistic and cultural attributes.

Our city is a melting pot of cultures, with over 200 languages spoken. In such a diverse city, it is crucial to acknowledge the unique skill set of multilingual learners and their impact on our

city. Many students from immigrant families find themselves in the role of translators, helping their families navigate the complexities of daily life in a new city. While students should never be responsible for translating for their families in a school setting, many have been forced to do so anyway due to a lack of adequate translation and interpretation services. Regardless, the Seal of Biliteracy can help recognize and showcase their skills by providing them with a sense of achievement and pride in their abilities, and open up future career pathways.

Often, however, immigrant students from households who speak a language other than English have parents who may not share their English language skills. Funding for critical programs such as the LIFE Project that assist immigrant families with enrollment in communities where the Department of Education identified lagging or under-enrollment in early childhood programs is equally important to ensure immigrant students get on the path to multiliteracy as soon as possible. Children should not have to carry the burden of supporting their families for translation services. The Department of Education must both recognize the skills and achievements of immigrant students who have thrived as well as invest in better communication, engagement, and translation and interpretation services for their families.

New York must do better at recognizing immigrant students' language capabilities as an asset, not a deficit. Recognition in the form of the Seal of Biliteracy not only celebrates linguistic diversity but also increases opportunities in both higher education and the workforce for immigrant and multilingual students post-graduation.

Our city is a beautiful mosaic of people from all around the world, each bringing their unique languages and cultures to our communities. The students we serve are a reflection of that diversity and we must ensure the Seal of biliteracy is awarded equitably.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Kesi Gordon
Senior Manager of Education Policy
New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)

New York City Council
Committee on Higher Education
Submitted by Clementina Jose
Wednesday, October 18th 2023

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Clementina Jose and I am a recent graduate of the Hunter Silberman School of Social Work, where I obtained my Masters in Social Work. I want to thank the New York City Council, especially the Committee on Higher Education, for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. I am here today to share my support for CUNY to accept this Seal of Biliteracy.

When I was in highschool, I was completely unaware of the Seal of Biliteracy until my graduation day. Though Spanish was not my native language, I excelled greatly in the subject but I was mainly advised by teachers to meet the bare minimum regarding expectations. Essentially, I was given the impression that all I had to do was perform well on exams and assignments during classes and going further in language exploration wasn't necessary. Hence, I was ineligible and unaware of the Seal of Biliteracy. According to the New York State Education Department, "although more and more students earn the NYSSB each year, less than five percent of graduating seniors are awarded the Seal". When we ask ourselves why this is the case, I believe that it is due to a lack of awareness of this opportunity. Firstly, I would say that I believe that not only should the New York State Seal of Biliteracy be awarded to eligible NYC public highschool students but there should also be more of an alarm raised concerning this subject. Not only should the opportunity be shared with students but students should be told about the benefits of the seal as well as what is required of them. Students who travail throughout highschool in language studies, should be given what they rightfully deserve, which is recognition of their hard work.

Further, it is only fair that if a student has proven throughout their highschool careers, that they have not just met benchmarks but have exceeded expectations, the seal should fulfill language requirements. Therefore, I urge the New York City Council to consider awarding the seal to eligible NYC public school students and also for CUNY to waive foreign language requirements to all students that have received the Seal. I believe that if we hope to highlight the achievement and hard work of students, as well as encourage them to pursue language studies, the only way to do that is if we provide reasonable incentives for students. If we inform students of this opportunity as well as help them understand that through receiving this seal, it can enhance their college applications, career prospects, cognitive skills and they can avoid having to fulfill a foreign language requirement in college. Personally, had I known this in highschool, I would have taken the offer and pushed myself. All in all, especially since I have missed out on the opportunity, I want to ensure that the next sets of highschool students can reap these benefits. I, thank you again to the Higher Education Committee for allowing me to speak with you today and share my experiences.

From: Lucas Liu <lmliu@panix.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 18, 2023 3:03 PM
To: Testimony
Cc:
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Seal of Biliteracy in DOE High Schools and at CUNY - comments

My name is Lucas Liu. I was a member of CEC3 for 8 years. 2 yrs as President. 6 yrs as Chair of the CEC3 Multilingual Committee.

There is no incentive for DOE schools to offer dual language programs.

- 1) DOE schools do not receive any funding to support their dual language programs. ESL students receive additional funding via the Fair Student Funding formula, DL programs do not.
- 2) There are few language programs that are geographically easily accessible from elementary to middle to HS. Many are only at the elementary school level and then few have middle school programs, and then some may have no middle school program, but are restarted at high school and at times the ES, MS or HS are not in the same district or borough.
- 3) DOE teachers are not paid extra to be a dual language teacher, however the DOE does pay for teachers to get the dual language attachment to their teaching license.

Also:

- 1) Dual language programs are not only for ENL students. It should be for all students regardless of culture, background, race, etc.
- 2) The seal is a state designation not by a NYC DOE designation.
- 3) I believe the large majority of Dual Language programs are already in low income schools
- 4) Some HS's use online or Rossetta Stone software to meet the language requirements.

I listened to speakers via the live stream. They talk like there is DOE support for these programs. If you go to the school level, Dual Language programs are the first to be dropped or reduced because there is little or no DOE support for dual language programs. For some schools where students don't have easy access to G&T programs, they turn to DL programs as an alternative.

The DOE needs to financially support dual language programs. A student can learn and become proficient in a language within the DOE and CUNY system. CUNY is also part of a study abroad program.

I have met with previous City Council Finance and Education Committee chair. There was no support from either besides words of encouragement, and in one case an offer of quid pro quo.

Regards,
Lucas

**New York City Council Committee on Higher Education and Committee on Education
Joint Hearing**

**Wednesday, October 18, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at City Hall and via
Zoom web-conference**

Subject: Oversight: Seal of Biliteracy in DOE High Schools and at CUNY

Resolution 0579-2023

Resolution 0580-2023

The CUNY Council on World Language Study (CCWLS) is committed to advancing language education and supporting the academic progress of our students. With a rich multi-decade history, the Council has been a steward of language learning and expertise in CUNY and New York. Our objectives, as outlined in our Constitution and By-Laws, are to:

- Promote CUNY-wide articulation among world language departments and programs in languages other than English, facilitating the exchange of information.
- Address pertinent issues within the CUNY language instructional community.
- Enhance the study of both modern and classical languages and literatures at CUNY and offer recommendations for their improvement.
- Encourage faculty development.
- Serve as the spokesperson for world languages within CUNY, liaising with the Central Administration and other organizations and institutions.

We are dedicated to driving language education forward and fostering a thriving community of language learners and educators at CUNY.

The Seals of Biliteracy and their umbrella certification, the Global Seal of Biliteracy, will represent vital initiatives designed to acknowledge students' biliteracy skills through nationally and internationally recognized certificates. These certifications should be aligned with established proficiency standards on both the national and international level, such as ACTFL and CEFR. Numerous studies, including the work of Dawin et al. (2018), have demonstrated that the Seal of Biliteracy not only enhances students' motivation to learn modern languages but also establishes a direct connection between their bilingual proficiency and future career prospects, thereby contributing to higher retention rates among bilingual students in high schools.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that New York has room for improvement in making this program accessible to all bilingual students. The latest report on the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (accessible at <https://bit.ly/3FhnWck>) highlights this gap. New York is trailing behind other states, such as California, which has conferred the Seal of Biliteracy upon over 45,000 students. The California document "Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy" can be a useful tool in establishing and implementing an "equitable system for admission and placement into postsecondary language programs or courses" promoting a more advanced curriculum for students that are proficient at the intermediate or higher level of proficiency thus building "upon the Seal of Biliteracy." (2020)

The CCWLS acknowledges the significance of the NYSSB and supports its objectives. Nonetheless, we advocate for the implementation of a robust external assessment model (such as AP, ACTFL OPI/WPT, or the International Baccalaureate model) to establish a clear equivalency between NYSSB and college-level modern language credits at CUNY. The intermediate or higher

level of proficiency to earn the seal should provide the colleges with a common yardstick to award credit on a consistent basis for Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams, as NY and other states would identify the proficiency level required to earn the Seal of Biliteracy based on such exam scores. With regard to Resolution 0580-2023, which urges CUNY to ensure that all campuses grant an appropriate number of college credits to students who have earned a New York State Seal of Biliteracy in high school, and, where necessary, accept the Seal as fulfillment of any foreign language requirement, we also advocate for a heightened level of faculty governance in matters impacting curriculum decisions at our colleges. Languages and literatures faculty at each campus should decide how many and what credits are earned by the NYSSB, as well as how these credits align with any language requirements at their campuses, as per faculty governance and oversight on curricular matters within their discipline.

Some of our inquiries revolve around the entities responsible for assessing students' proficiency. Will there be allocated funds to support assessment or placement tests? Will students be mandated to enroll in higher-level language courses in exchange for the credits granted? Moreover, we are concerned about the academic dimension of language acquisition. High school language courses typically fall short in comparison to their college-level counterparts in terms of academic rigor. In a college context, students have several options to immerse themselves in both culture and language, with abundant opportunities for practice such as robust online or in person language lab activities that encourage and develop speaking listening, reading and writing skills, study abroad opportunities, language tables, films, and clubs. Furthermore, college provides an environment where language learning is often intertwined with professional fields like interpreting and translation (including dubbing, localization, law, medical translations, teaching, business, international relations, etc.). Classes tend to be more intimate, offering optimal opportunities for practicing the second language and engaging with fellow students. Additionally, college courses afford students the chance to specialize in a particular language or linguistic field, granting them a deeper comprehension of the language, its associated culture, literary history, and related subjects. In contrast, high school language courses typically offer a basic introduction to a wide range of languages.

In a college setting, students are typically more motivated to learn a language as they have chosen it as part of their major or elective courses. This heightened motivation often translates into more favorable learning outcomes. Additionally, in college, students have the opportunity to delve into advanced courses covering language, literature, and culture. This not only offers intellectual enrichment but also elevates language proficiency to a higher tier. At the college-level languages and literatures coursework is generally more intellectually demanding than at the secondary level; encouraging more critical thinking and analysis; and higher levels of intercultural competency. Furthermore, college serves as an excellent platform for networking with professors, peers, individuals, and a wider society, who share similar language interests. This networking potential can prove invaluable for future career prospects, post graduate study, or collaborative endeavors.

In the realm of curriculum and the allocation of college credit within our discipline, we request the authority to assess portfolios or culminating projects (as outlined in criterion 2E) submitted by students for the Seal of Biliteracy. This applies when the student's qualifying World Language criteria do not already include nationally recognized language proficiency assessments indicative of college-level coursework, as exemplified in criterion 2D. This situation arises, for instance, with

exams like AP or IB, which are instructed by certified educators at a collegiate level. The right to appraise the portfolio or culminating project holds crucial importance in determining the allocation of credit within the academic department, as well as in establishing the appropriate course level for ongoing language studies. While completed years of high school coursework may indeed result in substantial language proficiency, it is important to note that the content and critical components of college-level instruction may not always be fully encapsulated in high school classes (as per criteria 2A, 2B, or 2C). Therefore, in the absence of a qualifying score on a nationally recognized college-level assessment (as stated in criterion 2D), it becomes imperative to evaluate the artifacts presented by students in the form of a portfolio or culminating project (according to criterion 2E). This evaluation helps determine whether the student has attained a level of college-level learning deserving of college credit.

As representatives of the CUNY Council on World Language Study, recognized experts in the field of language acquisition, we express our interest in contributing to the development and implementation of the NYS Seal of Biliteracy.

Sincerely,



Fabiola Salek, President CUNY Council on World Language Study
(On behalf of the Council)

Chair - Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Humanities
Professor and Coordinator of Women's Studies
Vice-Chair PSC CUNY York Chapter and York PSC Delegate
School of Arts and Sciences
York College, CUNY

For criteria, we refer to: https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/world-languages/criteria-to-earn-the-new-york-state-seal-of-biliteracy_0.pdf

Note approved assessments largely overlap with exams/assessments we would accept for at least placement purposes if not credit: <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/world-languages/approved-assessments-chart-2021-10-01.pdf>

2020 Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy. November 21, 2020.
<https://sealofbiliteracy.org/state-guidelines>

Guidelines for Implementing the Seal of Biliteracy-PDF 2020
<https://sealofbiliteracy.org/doc/sobl-guidelines-2020-final.pdf>

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 579, 580

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/18/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ariadna Pavlidis-Sanchez

Address: Huntington NY 11743

I represent: self

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

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Name: Isabella Gullon

Address: Prinx NY

I represent: self

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

Date: 10/18/23

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Name: Alicia Alvero, Assoc. Vice Chancellor for

Address: Academic and Faculty Affairs

I represent: Cony

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

Date: 10/18/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tatyana Klayn, Professor of Bilingual Ed

Address: _____

I represent: CUNY/CCNY

Address: _____

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Name: D.C. Carolyn Quintana

Address: _____

I represent: NYC PS

Address: _____

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Name: Mirza Sanchez-Medina

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I represent: NYCPS

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