



The Honorable Richard Bell  
Virginia House of Delegates  
P.O. Box 406  
Richmond, VA 23218

27 January 2015

Dear Delegate Bell,

On behalf of the 100 member organizations of the Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS), I write to you today to voice our support of House Bill 1351, which would introduce a diploma seal for students with demonstrated proficiency in both English and another world language. With this Seal of Biliteracy, Virginia would join the ranks of states at the forefront of a movement that is gaining momentum across the United States.

Languages are an essential component of 21st century skills. They are vital to global security, and increasingly important to our economic growth, as the language industry – itself a sector worth \$15b annually that employs more than 200,000 Americans – leverages more than \$1.5T in US trade. Virginia, in particular, is home to a number of language companies and organizations, including Rosetta Stone, the Foreign Service Institute School of Language Studies, the Defense Language Institute Washington Office, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the American Translators Association, the Intelligence Language Institute, and dozens of small companies in the translation, interpreting, training, and localization sectors.

A Seal of Biliteracy would provide Virginia's high school students with the recognition deserved for proficiency in English and second language, and serve as an indicator for potential employers and university admissions officers of the capacity of the student to succeed in an ever-demanding, ever-globalizing world.

In voicing our support, we also endorse the change to part F of the Bill proposed by the Foreign Language Association of Virginia, which would facilitate the development of a meaningful tool that acknowledges the hard work and skills of students, while communicating true proficiency to colleges and universities, and employers by allowing for recommendations and input from professionals and educators with expertise in the field of foreign language.

A Virginia Seal of Biliteracy would improve the position of Virginia students, giving them a competitive advantage in contributing to a nationally important sector. We respectfully ask for your support and will happily answer any questions.

With Best Wishes,

William P. Rivers, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

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