



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 580

Resolution calling on The City University of New York to ensure that all campuses award an appropriate number of college credits to students who earned a New York State Seal of Biliteracy in high school and, where required, accept that Seal as fulfillment of any foreign language requirement.

By Council Members Dinowitz, Louis, Hanif, Hudson, Brewer, Riley, Lee, Cabán and Narcisse

Whereas, According to the Endangered Language Alliance, over 700 languages and dialects are spoken in New York City (NYC) and the nearby metropolitan area, with 38 percent of those languages from Asia, 24 percent from Africa, 19 percent from Europe, 16 percent from the Americas, and the remaining from Oceania and the Pacific; and

Whereas, About 40 percent of undergraduates at The City University of New York (CUNY) speak a language other than English, with 174 different languages spoken across CUNY's campuses; and

Whereas, With proper credentialing, incoming CUNY students who have mastered two or more world languages, including students whose first language is not English, should be recognized and rewarded academically for their language skills; and

Whereas, The New York State Education Department (NYSED) states that the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB), established by the New York State Legislature in 2012, "recognizes high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in the three modes of communication (Interpretive, Interpersonal, Presentational) in English and one or more world languages"; and

Whereas, The NYSSB affirms the value of diversity, honors the multiple cultures and languages of New York communities, and supports the importance of underrepresented languages, while it furthers college and career success for high school graduates; and

Whereas, The NYSSB does not limit the languages for which the Seal can be awarded, thus making it possible to support students from underrepresented communities, including indigenous communities, whose language proficiency cannot be demonstrated through commercially available standardized tests; and

Whereas, In 2021-2022, 1,043 students graduating from NYC Department of Education (DOE) high schools across the five boroughs earned the NYSSB in 31 different languages; and

Whereas, CUNY, which enrolls about 45 percent of NYCDOE graduates (according to 2018-2019 figures), offers very limited ways for students to earn foreign language credits based on prior learning, such as by scoring a 3 on a College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Exam, offered in just seven world languages; and

Whereas, Public universities in other states and cities offer credit for the Seal of Biliteracy in their states, such as Illinois, where the Illinois School Code states that “[e]ach public community college and public university in this State shall establish criteria to translate a State Seal of Biliteracy into course credit based on foreign language course equivalencies identified by the community college’s or university’s faculty and staff”; and

Whereas, At the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy is worth 4 semester hours of foreign language credit if it is in a language taught at CCC or 4 semester hours of humanities elective credit if it is in a language not taught; and

Whereas, Depending on individual college policies, students with a Massachusetts State Seal of Biliteracy may earn from 4 to 15 college credits either in foreign languages or in humanities or fine arts electives in at least nine public higher education institutions; and

Whereas, Depending on individual college policies, students attending Minnesota’s public higher education system of 30 colleges and seven universities may be awarded from two semesters to four semesters worth of college foreign language credits for earning the Minnesota Bilingual and Multilingual Seals; and

Whereas, Many more CUNY students who earned the NYSSB at a NYCDOE high school could potentially meet CUNY’s academic requirements quicker if CUNY campuses awarded foreign language credits

and an exemption from any foreign language requirement, based on a student's earning the NYSSB; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on The City University of New York to ensure that all campuses award an appropriate number of college credits to students who earned a New York State Seal of Biliteracy in high school and, where required, accept that Seal as fulfillment of any foreign language requirement.

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