



Massachusetts Language Opportunity Coalition

August 4, 2016

Dear Members,

We are writing with an update on the LOOK bill and Seal of Biliteracy bill. The formal session of the Massachusetts state legislature ended at midnight on July 31st, and we are happy to report that both the Senate and House took action on the LOOK Bill!

The Massachusetts state **Senate** passed the LOOK Bill on July 7th unanimously with bipartisan support. This bill gives school districts the flexibility to offer bilingual programming without the need for waivers, and establishes a state Seal of Biliteracy. During the debate, both Senate Ways and Means Chair Karen Spilka and Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr voiced their support of the bill – it is quite notable to have two people in leadership on both the Democratic and Republican side speak in favor of a bill on the floor. Just a few weeks later, on July 31, in the flurry of last minute activity, the **House** passed their version of the LOOK bill.

However, the House version of the LOOK bill is quite different from the Senate bill, and *does not include the Seal of Biliteracy*. You can read the Senate bill here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/189/Senate/S2395> and the House bill here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/189/House/H4566>.

Nevertheless, this is the first time in fifteen years that legislators have taken action to address the one-size-fits-all English learner education mandate and recognize the value of bilingualism. We thank Senator Sal DiDomenico, Senator Karen Spilka, Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, Representative Jeffrey Sanchez, Representative Kay Khan and Representative Alice Peisch for their leadership and support of language learning in Massachusetts.

Senators Sal DiDomenico and Sonia Chang-Diaz published a great article about the need for flexibility in educating English language learners. You can find it here:

<http://commonwealthmagazine.org/education/flexibility-needed-in-educating-english-language-learners/>.

Although we are disappointed that the two versions of the bill are different, we are hopeful that the Senate and the House will continue to work together to reconcile the bill and include the Seal of Biliteracy, so it can be sent to the Governor for his signature before the legislative session ends in December. (Read an explanation of the legislative process here: <http://www.massbar.org/legislative-activities/the-legislative-process>.)

The Language Opportunity Coalition will continue to advocate for passage of the LOOK Bill and Seal of Biliteracy. Through this work, MATSOL, MaFLA and MABE have had the opportunity to come together in an historic and productive alliance that has built connections between language educators and that benefits all our student populations. We will continue to update you with news as we have it.

Thank you for your support! Please contact your organizational representative with any questions.

- Nicole Sherf, Massachusetts Foreign Language Association (MaFLA), advocacy@mafla.org, www.mafla.org
- Phyllis Hardy, Massachusetts Association for Bilingual Education (MABE), massmabe@gmail.com, www.massmabe.org
- Helen Solorzano, MATSOL - Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners, matsol@matsol.org, www.matsol.org