

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. RES. 229

Recognizing the significance of the 1973 New Mexico Bilingual Multicultural Education Act on its 50th anniversary and the importance of cultivating education in both the mother tongue as well as English for the preservation of culture, identity, and Indigenous knowledge.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 14, 2023

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

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## RESOLUTION

Recognizing the significance of the 1973 New Mexico Bilingual Multicultural Education Act on its 50th anniversary and the importance of cultivating education in both the mother tongue as well as English for the preservation of culture, identity, and Indigenous knowledge.

Whereas, when New Mexico became a territory of the United States in 1848, the predominant languages spoken were Diné (Navajo), Jicarilla and Mescalero Apache, Keres, Tiwa, Towa, Tewa, Zuni, and Spanish;

Whereas the citizens of the New Mexico territory recognized the importance of maintaining Spanish and these Indigenous languages, and rejected and resisted attempts to eradicate these languages as a precondition for becoming a State;

Whereas, when New Mexico was finally admitted as a State in 1912, its constitution provided for the education of teachers and students in Spanish;

Whereas Indigenous leaders recognized that their language was a gift from their creator which was essential for them to continue teaching successive generations of their purpose, way of life, customs, and laws;

Whereas Senator Matías Chacón introduced bill 421, the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act to the New Mexico State Legislature in 1973 in collaboration with several bilingual education advocates including Senator Ray Leger and Mela Leger, the director of bilingual education in the West Las Vegas schools;

Whereas New Mexico was the first State to adopt a bilingual multicultural education law, and the New Mexico Bilingual Multicultural Education Act is the only State legislation that acknowledges culture as an important part of language acquisition;

Whereas, since 1973, New Mexico has allocated State funds to districts for the implementation of bilingual multicultural education programs, and 70 percent of New Mexico school districts currently implement bilingual multicultural education programs;

Whereas the New Mexico 520 Alternative Certificate allows members of New Mexico's 22 Pueblos and Tribal Nations to teach their respective languages in New Mexico public schools;

Whereas, pursuant to section 2A of the New Mexico Bilingual Multicultural Education Act of 1973, a "bilingual multicultural education program" is a program where children learn through 2 languages, enhance and foster a positive

understanding of the cultures of their environment, and participate in “the wealth and beauty of such a rich cultural heritage” in “the pluralistic society in which we now live”;

Whereas bilingual multicultural education supports emergent bilingual students, prepares all students to participate in a multicultural society, and ensures equal access to education;

Whereas, in 1968, Congress passed the first major Federal legislation concerning bilingual education, the Bilingual Education Act (BEA), which became the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act;

Whereas the State Court held in *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* that the State failed to provide adequate education for students, particularly low-income students, English learners, Native Americans, and students with disabilities, thus requiring the State to ensure schools have the necessary resources, including sufficient funding, to provide all students with equal access to education;

Whereas New Mexico is 1 of the 49 States that has approved a Seal of Biliteracy;

Whereas New Mexico is 1 of at least 39 States that provides for training, professional development, teaching standards, certification, or endorsements for alternative language teachers in statute or regulation;

Whereas Federal legislation has been proposed to create grants for States to fund the Seal of Biliteracy program but remains unfulfilled;

Whereas nearly 22 percent of people in the United States speak a language other than English at home, and the Census Bureau reported that the 5 most frequently spoken languages other than English are Spanish or Spanish Creole, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Arabic;

Whereas there are roughly 245 Indigenous languages spoken across the United States, and many of these are at risk of extinction with only a small number of speakers remaining;

Whereas English learners are entitled to receive special services based on the 1974 Supreme Court decision in *Lau v. Nichols* so that they may learn the same academic content as English speakers and have access to public education;

Whereas, in 2002, Public Law 107–110 changed the name of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs at the Department of Education to the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students;

Whereas there are thousands of dual language programs across the country, and States like California, Massachusetts, Utah, North Carolina, Delaware, and Washington have moved toward dual language initiatives;

Whereas bilingual multicultural education is beneficial to all students, as it helps promote the development of a student's home or heritage language, bilingualism, biliteracy, and global awareness;

Whereas language skills, abilities, and practices are interconnected, and the more a student's home or heritage

language is supported, the stronger effect it will have on acquiring another language; and

Whereas language is an important aspect of a student's identity and culture, and studies show that being bilingual or multilingual has several benefits such as increased problem-solving abilities, increased creativity, increased concentration skills, increased learning, and increased interpersonal skills: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2           (1) supports efforts to incorporate bilingual  
3       multicultural education;

4           (2) supports efforts to encourage the Office of  
5       English Language Acquisition, Language Enhance-  
6       ment, and Academic Achievement for Limited  
7       English Proficient Students to become the Office of  
8       Multilingual Education;

9           (3) supports creating grants for teacher devel-  
10       opment to increase the number of bilingual teachers  
11       and professors in the United States;

12          (4) supports creating grants to fund the Seal of  
13       Biliteracy program; and

14          (5) supports efforts to help American-Indian  
15       Tribes and Nations maintain, revitalize, and teach  
16       their Indigenous languages.

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