



**Testimony Presented to Governor Cuomo's Education Reform Commission**  
New York, October 16, 2012

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On behalf of the Executive Board, Delegate Assembly, Executive Director, and members, the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE), wishes to thank the members of the Governor's Education Reform Commission for this opportunity to address concerns and present recommendations related to the education of New York States' English language learners (ELLs)/bilingual students.

NYSABE's main goals are (1) to safeguard the equitable educational rights of ELLs/bilingual learners and to ensure their academic success through the implementation of research-based Bilingual Education practices, and (2) to promote **Biliteracy** for all students in New York State so they can successfully participate in the global community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

At this pivotal time in education when we are facing major educational reforms and seek to ensure our full participation in **all** NYSED initiatives, it is imperative to acknowledge that the graduation rate for our state's ELLs/bilingual learners has decreased from 40.3% to 38.2 % while the graduation rate statewide has reached 73%. In addition, the percentage of ELLs/bilingual learners who were deemed to be college and career ready by the *Aspirational Performance Measures* of ELA and Mathematics was only 6% compared to 37% statewide. While we recognize that ELLs/bilingual learners face many obstacles and present schools with challenges, it is also critical to acknowledge that these students bring diverse gifts, talents, and linguistic/cultural resources that need to be utilized by schools to provide these youngsters with a strong foundation and the tools necessary to succeed academically.

Given these considerations, NYSABE has developed a multi-year **Advocacy Agenda for the Education of ELLs/bilingual Learners** and **The Recommendations for the Proposed Revisions of the Commissioner's Regulations Part 154**. These two documents, developed with the participation of NYSABE members statewide, delineate recommendations in the following areas:

- The inclusion of ELLs/bilingual students subgroups, such as early childhood/preschool children, students from Caribbean countries where Creole and non-Creole languages are spoken at home, students with severe disabilities, and students with interrupted formal education (SIFE)
- The initial identification and placement of all ELLs/bilingual learners, including the sub-groups listed above
- The assessment of ELLs/bilingual learners in general education and special education
- The optimum implementation of Bilingual/ESL Education programs and the development of Biliteracy
- School and District Programmatic and Financial Accountability
- Support Services
- Parental Participation
- Certification and In-service Professional Development Requirements for teachers and administrators responsible for educating ELLs/bilingual learners

As you review the two attached documents, we encourage and welcome you to contact us to further discuss any of the recommendations.

In closing, we thank you for your support to NYSABE's recommendations and your commitment to ensuring the best education for all New York State students including ELLs/bilingual learners.

*Awilda E. Ramos Zagarrigo*

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