

CHAPTER 320

EDUCATION - PUBLIC SCHOOLS

HOUSE BILL 26-1028

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also SENATOR(S) Cutter, Ball, Benavidez, Daugherty, Exum, Gonzales J., Hinrichsen, Jodeh, Kipp, Kolker, Marchman, Mullica, Sullivan, Wallace, Weissman, Coleman.

AN ACT**CONCERNING SECOND LANGUAGE DIPLOMA ENDORSEMENTS FOR GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.**

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly finds and declares that:

(a) The purpose of updating Colorado's seal of biliteracy is to modernize, clarify, and expand equitable access to Colorado's seal of biliteracy for high school graduates while maintaining rigorous standards;

(b) Colorado's seal of biliteracy was established to recognize high school graduates who demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one additional world language. The seal signals readiness for college, careers, and participation in a global economy.

(c) The implementation of the seal of biliteracy has varied widely across school districts: Out of the 179 school districts in Colorado, only 55 of them offer the seal of biliteracy for high school diplomas. Many students, particularly those in rural districts, small schools, or districts without formal biliteracy programs, face barriers when accessing the seal of biliteracy, despite demonstrating strong language skills.

(d) Biliteracy is defined as the proficiency in actively listening to, speaking, understanding, reading, and writing in English and another world language, while

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bilingualism is defined as the speaking, listening, and understanding of another world language and English;

(e) In order to earn a seal of biliteracy, high school students should be able to demonstrate speaking, listening, reading, and writing proficiency in a world language in numerous ways, including in coursework, assessments, or approved bodies of evidence;

(f) Colorado's public schools educate 114,482 multilingual learners. Expanding access to the seal of biliteracy and creating access to a seal of bilingualism for high school graduates will demonstrate Colorado's commitment to supporting all students.

(g) Multilingualism is a proven asset in business, health care, education, government services, and national security. Local and global industries in Colorado have unique demands for language skills, creating distinct career opportunities for multilingual professionals. The seal of biliteracy will allow high school graduates to prove their language skills to potential employers and will ease their transition into the workforce and higher education.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-7-1009.5, **amend** (2)(a)(I), (2)(a)(II)(B), (2)(b)(II), and (2)(b)(III); **repeal** (3)(b)(III); and **add** (1)(a.3), (1)(a.5), (1)(b.3), (2)(a)(II)(C), (2)(a)(II)(D), (2.5), and (5) as follows:

22-7-1009.5. Diploma endorsement - biliteracy - bilingualism - definitions.

(1) As used in this section, unless the context otherwise requires:

(a.3) "BILINGUALISM" MEANS THE ABILITY TO SPEAK, ACTIVELY LISTEN TO, AND UNDERSTAND ENGLISH AND ANOTHER WORLD LANGUAGE.

(a.5) "BILITERACY" MEANS THE ABILITY TO ACTIVELY LISTEN TO, SPEAK, UNDERSTAND, READ, AND WRITE ENGLISH AND ANOTHER WORLD LANGUAGE.

(b.3) "STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION MEANS A STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS DEFINED IN SECTION 23-18-102 (10), AND A LOCAL DISTRICT COLLEGE.

(2) A local education provider may grant a diploma endorsement in biliteracy to a graduating high school student who attains proficiency or higher in one or more world languages in addition to attaining proficiency or higher in English. To obtain an endorsement in biliteracy, a graduating student must:

(a) Demonstrate proficiency or higher in English by:

(I) Completing all of the English language arts course requirements for graduation from high school with an overall grade point average of at least 3.0 in the required English language arts courses; ~~and~~ OR

(II) (B) Passing the English language arts advanced placement test with a score of three or higher or passing the English language arts portion of an international baccalaureate test with a score of four or higher; ~~and~~ OR

(C) MEETING ONE OF THE OPTIONS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS BY USING ANY OF THE READING, WRITING, AND COMMUNICATING METHODS AND LEVELS INDICATED ON THE DEPARTMENT'S MENU OF COLLEGE AND CAREER READY DEMONSTRATIONS, AS ADOPTED BY THE STATE BOARD, OR A SUCCESSOR FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES; OR

(D) MEETING REQUIREMENTS FOR REDESIGNATION AS DESCRIBED IN THE COLORADO STANDARDIZED REDESIGNATION PROCEDURES FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS; AND

(b) Demonstrate proficiency or higher in one or more world languages by:

(II) ~~Successfully completing a four-year high school course of study in the world language and attaining an overall grade point average of at least 3.0 in the course of study;~~ PASSING A WORLD LANGUAGE COURSE OF STUDY THAT IS EQUIVALENT IN RIGOR TO A WORLD LANGUAGE ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSE WITH AN OVERALL GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF AT LEAST 3.0 IN THE COURSE OF STUDY, PASSING THE SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT AT THE COMPLETION OF A FOUR-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL COURSE OF STUDY IN THE WORLD LANGUAGE, OR PROVIDING A BODY OF EVIDENCE THAT MEASURES SPEAKING, ACTIVELY LISTENING TO, UNDERSTANDING, READING, AND WRITING THE LANGUAGE. IF PROVIDING A BODY OF EVIDENCE, THE EVIDENCE MUST BE OF EQUAL RIGOR TO THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEST; or

(III) Achieving a passing score on the world language portion of a nationally recognized test that ASSESSES THE STUDENT'S ABILITY TO SPEAK, ACTIVELY LISTEN TO, UNDERSTAND, READ, AND WRITE AND is relied upon by institutions of higher education.

(2.5) A LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER MAY GRANT A DIPLOMA ENDORSEMENT IN BILINGUALISM TO A GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WHO ATTAINS PROFICIENCY OR HIGHER IN ONE OR MORE WORLD LANGUAGES IN ADDITION TO ATTAINING PROFICIENCY OR HIGHER IN ENGLISH. TO OBTAIN AN ENDORSEMENT IN BILINGUALISM, A GRADUATING STUDENT MUST:

(a) DEMONSTRATE ORAL PROFICIENCY OR HIGHER IN ENGLISH BY:

(I) MEETING ONE OF THE OPTIONS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS BY USING ANY OF THE READING, WRITING, AND COMMUNICATING METHODS AND LEVELS INDICATED ON THE DEPARTMENT'S MENU OF COLLEGE AND CAREER READY DEMONSTRATIONS, AS ADOPTED BY THE STATE BOARD, OR A SUCCESSOR FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES; OR

(II) MEETING REQUIREMENTS FOR REDESIGNATION AS DESCRIBED IN THE COLORADO STANDARDIZED REDESIGNATION PROCEDURES FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS; AND

(b) DEMONSTRATE ORAL PROFICIENCY OR HIGHER IN ONE OR MORE WORLD LANGUAGES BY ACHIEVING A PASSING SCORE ON THE WORLD LANGUAGE ORAL PORTION OF A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED TEST THAT ASSESSES THE STUDENT'S ABILITY TO LISTEN, SPEAK, AND UNDERSTAND AND IS RELIED UPON BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION; OR

(c) PROVIDE A BODY OF EVIDENCE THAT MEASURES SPEAKING, ACTIVELY LISTENING TO, AND UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE. IF PROVIDING A BODY OF EVIDENCE, THE EVIDENCE MUST BE OF EQUAL RIGOR TO THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEST.

(3)(b) Notwithstanding any provision of subsection (2)(b)(I) of this section to the contrary:

~~(III) If an advanced placement test exists or the department has identified a comparable test for a world language, and the local education provider creates and uses an alternative test for that world language, the department must approve the local education provider's test before the local education provider may use the test to determine a student's level of proficiency in the world language in place of an advanced placement test for purposes of subsection (2)(b)(I) of this section.~~

(5)(a) A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WHO ATTENDS A LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER THAT DOES NOT OFFER A DIPLOMA ENDORSEMENT OF BILITERACY, OR BILINGUALISM, PURSUANT TO SUBSECTIONS (2) AND (2.5) OF THIS SECTION MAY SEEK AN ENDORSEMENT OF BILITERACY OR BILINGUALISM FROM A STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OR OTHER LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER THAT OFFERS THE ENDORSEMENT THE STUDENT IS SEEKING.

(b) PRIOR TO SEEKING A DIPLOMA ENDORSEMENT OF BILITERACY OR BILINGUALISM FROM A STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OR OTHER LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER, A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT MUST FIRST SEEK THE ENDORSEMENT FROM THEIR OWN LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER. IF THE STUDENT'S LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER DOES NOT OFFER THE ENDORSEMENT AND CHOOSES NOT TO ESTABLISH A PROGRAM TO OFFER THE ENDORSEMENT, THE STUDENT'S LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER MAY ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH ANOTHER LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER OR STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THAT OFFERS A DIPLOMA ENDORSEMENT OF BILITERACY OR BILINGUALISM, WHICHEVER ENDORSEMENT THE STUDENT IS SEEKING.

(c) AFTER A STUDENT SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES THE ENDORSEMENT, THE STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OR OTHER LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER SHALL SEND VERIFICATION OF THE COMPLETED ENDORSEMENT TO THE STUDENT AND THE STUDENT'S LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER.

(d) A STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OR OTHER LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER MAY CHARGE A FEE TO PROVIDE THE ENDORSEMENT. THE FEE MUST REFLECT THE ACTUAL AND INDIRECT COSTS TO THE STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OR OTHER LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER OF PROVIDING THE BILITERACY ENDORSEMENT PROGRAM. ANY FEE ASSESSED MUST BE PAID BY THE STUDENT'S LOCAL EDUCATION PROVIDER.

SECTION 3. Act subject to petition - effective date. This act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly (August 12, 2026, if adjournment sine die is on May 13, 2026); except that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.

Approved: June 2, 2026