

June 28, 2013

The Honorable Julia Brownley
House of Representatives
1019 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Brownley,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the California Association for Bilingual Education, I write in full support for the BEST Act which would establish a grant program at the Department of Education. The purpose of the BEST Act would recognize high-level student proficiency in speaking, reading and writing in both English and a second language and honor them for their level of bilingualism—a key skill for 21st Century Success. Under this program, states would be able to establish or improve upon their own Biliteracy Seal programs to award seals to high school seniors.

To be eligible for a Seal, the requirements are rigorous—a high school senior must have a strong academic record in both English and a second language and must be a candidate for graduation. A “Seal” would be a marker on a graduating high school senior’s diploma and academic transcript which certifies a student is fluent and literate in a language other than English as well as non-spoken languages such as American Sign and Braille.

Establishing a Seal of Biliteracy is a very strong indicator of success for students. It encourages the development of language skills necessary for our students to be able to compete in an ever increasing diverse global economy and to help employers, colleges and universities distinguish talented applicants that possess valuable language skills.

As a result of legislation you authored establishing the State Seal of Biliteracy in California, our state has issued approximately 10,000 Seals of Biliteracy honors to high school seniors participating in this program in California. In addition, the States of New York and Illinois have recently enacted legislation establishing a State Seal of Biliteracy for their states and many others are in the process of doing so.

The BEST Act will assist in the promotion and maintenance of bilingualism and biliteracy—a significant 21st Century skill. What better way to celebrate diversity and multiculturalism and the accomplishments of our students.

CABE is in full support of the BEST Act and would be pleased to be a co-sponsor of this very important legislation. Please contact feel free to contact me or our legislative staff member, Martha Zaragoza-Diaz, should you have any comments regarding our letter of support. We thank you for your leadership and vision for the success of our bilingual students!

Sincerely,



Jan Gustafson Corea
CEO