

# **APPENDIX V – 19**

Good Afternoon Madame Chair and committee members,

Thank you for providing this opportunity to Tucson Unified School District to speak in support of House Bill 2184. Our district serves approximately 5000 English learners, so this bill has the potential to impact our programs immensely.

To provide some background about TUSD's interest in this issue, our district has been involved in the efforts to permit flexibility in the instruction of ELs since the introduction of the 4-hour SEI model. In September 2017, TUSD presented a research-based alternate model to the State Board of Education. The Board seemed receptive to the model, but was clearly restricted by current law.

Although the current model has been in place for over ten years, it has rendered a greater achievement gap for ELs on AZMerit and the lowest graduation rate for ELs in the nation. Other language models with a stronger research base exist and are used throughout the country with success.

My department, the Language Acquisition Department, believes in and supports a strong English Language development program. We support classroom teachers by training them in methodologies for explicit English language instruction and by coaching effective teaching strategies. We provide materials and texts that are specifically designed for English Learners at various stages of proficiency. We believe that all of this is essential for student success. However, the current model restricts us greatly. Year after year, we work diligently with our schools to comply with daily schedules that include the mandated 240 minutes of SEI instruction. Sometimes schools have to steal minutes from math, or remove an elective the student loves. Social studies takes a backseat to the point where we have ELs and former ELs arriving at high school without ever having studied American history. The result is not only a gap in English, but also a gap of knowledge. Furthermore, the absence of English-proficient students in the SEI classroom means the only proficient model of English in the room is the teacher.

House Bill 2184 enhances flexibility, choice and access. Schools will have the ability to utilize the model that works best to meet the needs of their school community. Parents and students will have increased access to programs and opportunities of their choice. ELs will have increased academic interaction with English-dominant students, resulting in an acceleration of language learning through peer-to-peer language modeling. Through research-based methods such as Sheltered Content Instruction and project-based learning, ELs will have greater access to content areas and standards, and to arts and Career and Technical Education, resulting in greater student engagement, increased graduation rates and more college and career-ready graduates.

Once again, on behalf of Tucson Unified, we encourage you to give House Bill 2184 your strong support.