



Fronteras Spanish Immersion Charter School Centro Académico

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Wednesday, April 1, 2015

Dear Representative Keller,

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I write this letter of support for HB 157, authored by Representative Kreiss-Tomkins.

As the Principal of the only immersion school in the Mat-Su Borough School District, Fronteras Spanish Immersion Charter School, I have first-hand knowledge of the difficulty immersion programs face when hiring qualified instructional staff that must fulfill state requirements. HB 157, if passed, will significantly and positively impact current and future immersion charter schools. Currently, instructional staff must have an Alaska State Type A teaching certificate and be Highly Qualified in the subject/grade level they teach. In the past four years as Fronteras' administrator, I have met many native and heritage (Spanish) speaking individuals with classroom experience and a strong desire to teach, but lack certification. Not only have these particular individuals possessed the cultural knowledge and desired dialect, but they have the innate ability to dispense knowledge in a purposeful and appropriate manner.

I applaud Representative Kreiss-Tomkins for recognizing the hole this has left in immersion programs, and his desire to correct it. Creating a special certificate, similar to the already existing Type M, will allow immersion charter schools to employ native speaking individuals, who through the use of their language, will deliver a standards based educational program, all while honoring cultural awareness.

Research shows that a language immersion education provides individuals with increased problem-solving skills, improved linguistic awareness, higher academic achievement among peers, and an increased advantage in both national and international job markets.





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Lastly, I would like to address the importance that HB 157 brings to our Alaska Native tribes and community members specifically. The sustaining and/or revitalization of Alaska's languages are of the utmost importance if we are truly invested in the preservation of Alaska's rich history.

I highly recommend and support the passing of HB 157.

Most Sincerely,

Jennifer A. Schmidt
Principal
Fronteras Spanish Immersion Charter School

