



# NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION

P.O. Box 70  
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**Executive Director**

Nancy Villarreal de Adler

April 1, 2009

New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver

LOB 932

Albany, NY 12248

Dear Mr. Silver,

On behalf of its membership, which includes educators, parents, advocates, community-based organizations, and private and public institutions involved in the education of English language learners (ELLs), the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE) expresses its opposition to Bill Number A5350, an act to amend the state law, in relation to making English the official language of New York State.

One of the main goals of NYSABE is to foster the awareness and appreciation of multilingualism and multiculturalism as an integral part of cultural pluralism in our society. This principle is consistent with the tenets of a global society where the abilities of speaking, reading, and writing in more than one language are fundamental in fostering understanding and common goals among all peoples.

As a professional organization that advocates for the educational advancement of students and families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, NYSABE acknowledges current educational research that demonstrates the positive impact of the use of the students' native language on academic success in an all-English language environment. Such educational research indicates that students taught in the native language, while learning English, do better on assessments of English literacy and content areas than those youngsters in all English programs (Slavin and Cheung, 2005; Rolstad, Mahoney, and Glass, 2005; Genesse, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, and Christian, 2005; and Francis, Lesaux, and August, 2006). Similarly, academic success has been linked to parent engagement and participation in adult literacy programs. Numerous reports from throughout New York State substantiate the increasing participation of immigrant family members in English as a second language and biliteracy programs, as an effort to ensure economic and educational advancement.

It is important to note that there is no scientific data that demonstrate that the declaration of an official language will "better serve the diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of New York citizens." On the contrary, we believe that English-only xenophobic laws and policies restrict the participation of immigrants, as well as U.S. born speakers of other languages, in the political, social, economic, and educational life of their communities, thus denying them their most elemental civil rights.

In closing, NYSABE urges you and the New York State Assembly to protect the rights of New York State's linguistically and culturally diverse communities and to promote their advancement by denying their support to Bill Number A5350 and by ensuring appropriate funding for adult literacy, bilingual, and English as a second language programs.

Yours,

*Anne Henry Montante*

Anne Henry Montante  
President

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