

June 14, 2019

Dear Matt Dolan and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Angela Gardner, and I am the Public Relations and Advocacy Chair for the Ohio Foreign Language Association, as well as a Spanish Teacher at Ross High School in the southwestern corner of the state. For over a decade, it has been my personal pride and joy to coach and foster learning in the Spanish language and its beautiful cultures to many of the finest and kindest young people I could ever ask to teach.

Each year, I get the opportunity to witness as students grow from timid, unsure novice language users into more confident, compassionate, and competent language users and individual human beings. In my classroom, we exuberantly seek and celebrate perseverance, risk taking, and kindness. I know that my classroom is not an exception, but that many of my colleagues have expressed to me the magical and wonderful transformation that they see in their students as they acquire so many new skills that go well beyond language learning.

I felt compelled to drive here to Columbus from my home in southwest Ohio today, because the young people that I serve now, and will continue to serve in the future, are in danger of losing opportunities due to recent legislation. I ask you to please consider removing lines 24584-24590 of HB 166 "If a school district or chartered nonpublic school requires a foreign language as an additional graduation requirement under division (E) of this section, a student may apply one unit of instruction in computer coding to satisfy one unit of foreign language. If a student applies more than one computer coding course to satisfy the foreign language requirement, the courses shall be sequential and progressively more difficult."

Skills that result from language learning include increased multitasking abilities, increased empathy, increased risk tolerance, increased communication skills, and more. The outcomes of coding are valuable in the modern era, but the skills that result from language learning are highly sought after in many fields of employment. On a survey, 9 in 10 US businesses indicated that they rely on employees with multilingual skills, and over half anticipated increased need for these skills in the future. Our students cannot afford to miss the professional opportunities and the profitability of learning languages. **We should be making language learning a priority in our academic programs for the future prosperity of these students, our state, and our nation.**

**Experts and professionals in the field of computer science agree--**"Code.org formally opposes the idea of classifying computer science as a foreign language." -Hadi Partovi, CEO, Code.org. "...the proposal that foreign language learning can be replaced by computer coding knowledge is misguided... I fervently believe that foreign language learning is essential for children's development into informed and productive citizens of the world."- Dr. William Eggington, Professor, Johns Hopkins University. "Coding is an incredibly important 21st century skill... But I don't believe it is the same or even really comparable to learning a foreign language."- Srinu Mandyam, CTO and co-founder of instructional coding company Tynker.

I cannot fathom an academic program that could prepare our students well for the challenges and demands of the future without prioritizing language learning. Our students will need skills like perseverance, multi-tasking, and creative problem-solving. These are innately grounded in the experiences of language learners as they work to understand and be understood, not only with new words, but through new eyes and with hearts attuned to the perspectives of others. I

plead that you eliminate these lines from the budget helping to keep the doors open to a world of possibilities for our students.

Cordially,

Angela N. Gardner