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**Testimony of Julia Konrad, Assistant Director  
To The New York City Council Committees on Immigration and Education  
Wednesday, November 29, 2023**

Good morning, Chair Joseph, Chair Hanif, and members of the Education and Immigration Committees. My name is Julia Konrad and I am the Assistant Director for Education at the New York City Independent Budget Office. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this oversight hearing on immigrant students in New York City Public Schools. In my testimony, I will first discuss how New York City's population of English Language Learners has changed in recent years. Then, I will discuss enrollment in types of programs offered by the Department of Education (DOE) to support English Language Learners. Finally, I will discuss the availability of bilingual and English as a Second Language teachers, as of last school year.

*English Language Learners Make Up Nearly One Fifth of All K-12 Traditional Public School Students*

In my testimony, I will be discussing the demographics and program enrollment of English Language Learners for school year 2022-2023. Our data on English Language Learners (ELLs) includes students in traditional public schools (Districts 1-32, 75, and 79) in grades Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. While the DOE does offer language support at the Pre-K level, our student-level data do not include those students.

In 2022-2023, the share of K-12 traditional public school students who were English Language Learners increased to nearly 19 percent of all students. In other words, nearly one in five K-12 students in traditional public school is an English Language Learner. The year before, in 2021-2022, that share was 17 percent, and in 2020-2021, it was 16 percent. Between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, the number of English Language Learners increased from more than 148,000 students to about 159,000—an increase of more than 11,000 students, or an 8 percent increase.

When new students enter the NYC public school system, enrollment staff issue the Home Language Questionnaire to identify if a language other than English is spoken at home. If it is, school-based staff administer the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL), which identifies students' level of English proficiency. In 2022-2023, the share of English Language Learners scoring at the "Entering" level, or beginning level, on that diagnostic test increased from 26 percent of ELLs the year before to 31 percent. And so, as of the 2022-2023 school year, nearly a third of New York City's ELLs were at the beginning level of English proficiency. In comparison, in 2019-2020, 19 percent of ELLs scored at the "entering" proficiency level. At the other end of the spectrum, the shares of students designated in the two most advanced categories of English proficiency has been declining.

<b>The Share of English Language Learners at The Beginning Level of English Proficiency Has Increased</b>					
Year	Total Count of English Language Learners	Share of English Language Learners at Each Proficiency Level			
		Entering (Beginning)	Emerging (Low Intermediate)	Transitioning (Intermediate)	Expanding (Advanced)
2019-2020	141,600	19%	16%	24%	41%
2020-2021	146,800	25%	16%	22%	37%
2021-2022	148,300	26%	17%	22%	35%
2022-2023	159,000	31%	17%	20%	31%

SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education's annual ELL survey data

*In 2022-2023, the Share of English Language Learners in Bilingual Programs Increased Slightly*

The DOE offers three types of programs to support English language acquisition. Two out of the three types of programs that the DOE offers to support English language acquisition—Dual Language and Transitional Bilingual Education—are considered bilingual, while the third—English as a New Language (ENL)—is not. While bilingual programs provide content instruction in students’ home languages, ENL programs provide English instruction as a stand-alone class or as push-in support to students from a range of language backgrounds. Teachers providing ENL Only instruction may provide additional resources in students’ home languages, but most of the instruction occurs in English. Bilingual programs are often seen as the preferred placement for ELLs as research shows that the inclusion of home languages provides cognitive, social-emotional, and academic benefits to students learning English. While the DOE offers families bilingual and ENL options, student enrollment ultimately depends both on family preferences and the availability of program seats.

In 2022-2023, roughly 79 percent of ELLs were enrolled in English as a New Language programs, 10 percent were in transitional bilingual education programs, and 9 percent were in dual language programs. Between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years, the overall share of students in bilingual programs (dual language or transitional bilingual education programs) increased slightly, from 18 percent of all ELLs to 19 percent. This slight increase in the share of students in bilingual programs—even as the overall number of enrolled ELLs increased—likely reflects the DOE’s expansion of bilingual programs over the last school year.

<b>Even as the Number of English Language Learners Increased in 2022-2023, The Share Enrolled in Bilingual Programs Increased Slightly</b>				
Year	Share of English Language Learners by Program Type			
	Dual Language Programs	Transitional Bilingual Programs	English as a New Language Programs	Student Not Being Served
2019-2020	7%	10%	81%	2%
2020-2021	7%	10%	80%	3%
2021-2022	8%	10%	80%	2%
2022-2023	9%	10%	79%	2%

SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education's annual ELL survey data

This current fiscal year, 2023-2024, the DOE provided additional funds to schools opening bilingual programs this fall, as well as those planning to do so the following school year (2024-2025). Forty-four schools received planning funds to open additional bilingual programs in 2023-2024, and another 14 schools received planning funds to open programs in 2024-2025.

### *New Incentives Aim to Recruit New Bilingual and ESL Licensed Teachers*

In a report published this May, IBO identified the number of active bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in schools as of October 31, 2022, using the DOE's staffing and state certification data.

There are two types of state certifications that support language acquisition for English Language Learners: a bilingual extension in addition to an existing teaching certification, or a separate English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) certification. While teachers may hold multiple state certifications that would qualify them to teach in various domains, the DOE issues one license to every DOE teacher based on their active teaching role. IBO identified 1,873 bilingual teachers and another 3,606 ESL teachers across K-12 traditional public schools as of October 31 of 2022.

Of the 1,873 bilingual teachers, the majority of teachers—1,640 teachers, or 88 percent—held bilingual licenses in Spanish. The next most common category of bilingual licenses were in Chinese languages, with 179 licensed teachers (10 percent). The third most common bilingual license was in French, with 22 teachers (1 percent). That school year, 66 percent of ELLs spoke Spanish at home. The next most common category of languages spoken at home were Chinese languages (nearly 10 percent of ELLs), followed by Arabic (roughly 5 percent of ELLs).

This fall, recent efforts aimed to encourage the recruitment of new and already-qualified bilingual and ESL teachers to work within those roles. The New York State Education Department temporarily eased requirements to receive bilingual and ESOL state certification, and the DOE is waiving the one-year probation period usually required for teachers switching between licenses. And finally, just this month, the DOE and United Federation of Teachers reached an agreement for a \$5,000 incentive to be awarded to qualified teachers who switched from an existing license in another domain into a bilingual or ESL license. As these incentives take effect, IBO will continue to track New York City's teaching workforce and the supports provided to our English Language Learners.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.