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**The School District Must Provide Assistance for Speakers of Indigenous Languages**  
*Education Law Center Comments to the Board of Education of the Sch. Dist. of Philadelphia;*  
March 23, 2023

My name is Kristina Moon and I use she/her pronouns. I am mom to a Kindergartener at Lingelbach Elementary and a senior attorney at Education Law Center. ELC receives hundreds of calls from families and students through our Helpline and also engages with community organizations serving families across the district. I'm here tonight with HIAS, La Puerta Abierta, and Migrant Education Program to raise urgent concerns about the supports needed for parents speaking indigenous languages.

English learners are a rapidly growing population in the district, with over 21,000 ELs and over 150 languages spoken by students and family members.

Under federal and state laws, the district is obligated to identify students and parents that do not speak English and provide a meaningful opportunity for parents to participate in their child's education and as to students - to provide English language instruction AND sufficient language access supports that the child has equal access to all education opportunities.

While many of the district's formal policies and procedures appropriately restate those obligations, the families, students and partners we hear from report they are not implemented effectively and consistently - across schools or the various languages spoken. You'll hear from other speakers about caregivers and students who speak indigenous languages who have been effectively denied any opportunity to engage with their school because of the district's lack of resources in their home languages.

While some of the district's procedures state that translation or interpretation will be provided where "feasible" or "practicable" - any legal support for such limitations is only as to a certain *format* - whether written translation or in-person oral interpretation - and not an excuse to refuse or fail to provide any language support in a particular language or specific family or student's need. All students - regardless whether they speak a language of lesser diffusion - are required to attend school and cannot be denied equitable access or parent participation.

As our community agencies have demonstrated in their own work, it is feasible to contract with vendors and tools in these languages, to revise systems to collect accurate & complete data, and more frequently train ALL staff.

A failure to correct this discrimination suggests a deliberate indifference to our families that speak indigenous languages for which the district would be liable. We urge the district to quickly allocate the resources necessary to ensure these minimum standards in ALL languages.