According to 2020 US Census data, 4.6% of my community (Mason County) and 8.3% of residents of the United States overall speak English "less than very well". Among other non-English speakers in Mason County, we have a significant population of indigenous Guatemalan immigrants who fled decades of civil war, fought in the interests of American business, to build a better life for their families here. They found jobs in the seafood and forestry industries and brought their families up to join them when they could. I encounter these individuals in the aisles of Walmart, where they seem to rely on children who speak slightly more English to navigate the most mundane tasks in our society. I also encounter them in my work as a law enforcement officer as they emerge from the forest with bundles of salal harvested for the floral industry, but often drop their loads and flee back into the forest knowing that they probably aren't compliant with all the arcane regulations governing the harvest of natural products on Federal land. And I have encountered their children as an occasional substitute teacher and a parent who opted to send his son to the bilingual Evergreen Elementary School, which was established in Shelton for the benefit of this immigrant community. Those children and their parents seem to understand that their best chance to succeed in their new home is to learn English and get the best education possible, but with the resources available locally I have seen too many of them falling behind. When they are left behind, or drop out of school to take unskilled jobs which pay less than minimum wage under the counter, our whole community loses.

I am applying to Evergreen's MIT program because here, at the end of my law enforcement career, I am hoping to return to my first love, science, and share that with others. Science, I believe, is humanity's best hope for the future. Ironically, it can be reasonably argued that science brought us to this precipice; however, it is also the strongest tool mankind has developed over our 100,000-year history to find the solutions we need and persuade our fellow travelers to adopt them. The Einstein or Darwin critical to our next great breakthroughs might be not be an English speaker. It might instead be one of those Guatemalan immigrant children or one of the billions of non-English speakers globally, and right now that child may not be getting the education he or she needs to fully realize all of their potential.

Even for the vast majority who will never win a Fulbright scholarship or individually change the world, an education is still the door to a better life and the ability to contribute more to society. Now more than ever, we need a scientifically literate society, that includes *every* member of our society, to rebut the insanity of climate change denial, vaccine conspiracy theories, bigotry, and all the other threats we face. Whether it is working in a lab to find solutions, or as a health care provider, or just casting an informed vote, a good science education makes better citizens- and I want to be part of that.

Thirty years ago, fresh out of undergrad, I still hoped I might change the world. I didn't achieve anything so noteworthy in my first career and may not influence any child who will individually change the world in my second career. But I think I can persuade a few children that the world *needs* saving and I hope can help them find their role in that effort, whether they be the children of Guatemalan immigrants or fourth-generation European Americans.

1) [People That Speak English Less Than "Very Well" in the United States (census.gov)](#)
2) [Why Guatamalans come to Mason County and what happens to them there - Works in Progress (olywip.org)](#)