

February 28, 2024

House Committee on Education  
Rhode Island State House  
[HouseEducation@rilegislature.gov](mailto:HouseEducation@rilegislature.gov)

Re: **Testimony SUPPORTING House Bills 7514 and 7438**, creating a dual language program fund to be administered by the department of education, and a task force to develop recommendations to improve access to early intervention and early childhood special education services, respectively.

Dear Chair McNamara and Honorable Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of House Bills 7514 and 7438.

As a now-retired public elementary school teacher of 20 years, I have seen far too many children whose educational needs were not adequately met in school. Two of the groups most short-changed by the public school system are those learning English as an additional language, and those in need of special education services. We never had enough resources or personnel for these students, and the difference in outcomes was remarkable when we encountered students who had access to additional supports or who had benefited from early intervention. These two bills would take RI a crucial step forward towards educational equity for vulnerable and marginalized populations, and I urge you to support them.

Thank you for your time and attention, and for all of your work on behalf of all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Gerard,  
Providence, RI