

House Committee on Education  
From: Parents Leading for Educational Equity  
Re: RELATING TO EDUCATION -- SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO BILINGUAL  
EDUCATION ACT H7514

Date: February 28, 2024

Greetings members of the House Committee on Education, my name is Ramona Santos Torres, I am the executive director of [Parents Leading for Educational Equity](https://pleeri.org) (PLEE). We are a grassroots, family advocacy organization fighting for equitable systems of care for families and children. On behalf of PLEE and the parents we represent, I want to express the **support** for house bill H7514. This legislation recognizes the pivotal role bilingual education plays in fostering economic growth, and ensuring equitable opportunities for all students in the State of Rhode Island. Proficiency in multiple languages is not just an academic skill but a powerful tool for economic advancement, aligning perfectly with the state's goal of ensuring its residents are well-equipped for the challenges and opportunities of the modern world.

By affirming the right of every resident to nurture their native language while encouraging proficiency in English, the bill strikes a balance that recognizes the diversity of the community and promotes cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the legislation rightly emphasizes the positive impact of native language instruction on the overall academic achievement of students. The acknowledgment that dual language programs contribute significantly to English proficiency and academic success aligns with educational research and best practices. The mandate for the Department of Education to create a model policy and timeline demonstrates a commitment to ensuring the effective implementation of these programs.

In conclusion, the Support and Access to Bilingual Education Act is a visionary piece of legislation that recognizes the importance of bilingual education in shaping the future of Rhode Island. By investing in high-quality dual language programs, the state has the opportunity to not only bridge educational gaps but also promote cultural diversity, economic growth, and global competitiveness. I urge all members of the General Assembly to wholeheartedly support this bill for the betterment of Rhode Island's students and the state as a whole.

Sincerely,

Ramona Santos Torres

Executive Director

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