

Dear Chair McNamara and Member of the Committee on Education:

As an educator, I am writing in strong support of House Bill 5836, which would make Ethnic Studies a graduation requirement in every high school across Rhode Island. We know Ethnic Studies changes lives. Research has shown that it increases student desire to learn, helps young people recognize and challenge racist systems, and fosters deep feelings of liberation and belonging. As a World Languages Teacher Educator and leader in the field, I also recommend that World Language Teachers are included in the list of educators who could teach an Ethnic Studies course. Ethnic Studies is a perfect focus for an upper-level language class, particularly for a world language course designed for heritage language learners. I have many examples of WL teachers who are already essentially teaching Ethnic Studies within their language classes, so they could support professional learning for others in collaboration with ARISE and the OSPVD Coalition. This would also be a way to provide MLL students access to Ethnic Studies in their home language while they are on the pathway to acquiring English.

Sincerely,

Erin Papa  
Providence, RI 02909  
House District 8

--  
Erin L. Papa, Ph.D.  
[erin.papa@gmail.com](mailto:erin.papa@gmail.com)

Co-Founder and Director, Coalition for a Multilingual RI  
@MultilingualRI  
[www.multilingualri.org](http://www.multilingualri.org)