

TESTIMONY

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Catherine Szetela Reyes and I am writing in strong support of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a Spanish Teacher at Paul Cuffee High School in Providence, RI and I care deeply about these bills.

I support this legislation because learning a new language opens up our worlds and helps us to develop intercultural competence skills that allow us to create a more inclusive and close-knit community.

This bill matters because:

- **Bilingual programs help all students succeed.** Research shows that dual language programs lead to stronger academic outcomes—not only for multilingual learners, but also for English-dominant students. These programs close achievement gaps and promote advanced learning in two languages.
- **Multilingualism is key to Rhode Island's future workforce.** More than 90% of employers seek workers with language skills. Investing in bilingual education prepares students for real-world careers, supports business development, and strengthens the state's economy.
- **It promotes equity and addresses teacher shortages.** Multilingual learners in Rhode Island are primarily located in under-resourced districts. This bill expands access to high-quality programs in those communities and helps build a pipeline of qualified bilingual educators by removing certification barriers.

I respectfully urge you to support this bill and invest in the academic success, workforce readiness, and equitable opportunities of Rhode Island's multilingual students.

Gracias.

Catherine Reyes