

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Dr. Sandra Silva-Enos, and I am writing in strong support of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a Secondary Education Professor from Providence College, and I care deeply about these bills.

I support this legislation because I was once an ELL-classified student who did not receive the proper supports during my primary education. This led to many moments of frustration, self-doubt, and academic struggles that could have been avoided with appropriate assistance. Additionally, as a former teacher, I worked with many multilingual students who thrived when adequate support systems were in place, particularly when educators had the necessary training to meet their needs. Now, as a teacher educator and researcher, I consistently emphasize the importance of programs such as dual language education. These programs are designed to support students holistically by addressing language development, sociocultural competence, and academic achievement together, rather than focusing on academics alone often at the expense of students' cultural and linguistic identities. Recognizing and valuing students' full linguistic repertoires is a strength. Unfortunately, this strength has not been supported enough, despite its potential to make a significant difference for Rhode Island's diverse student population.

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.

Thank you,



Dr. Sandra Silva-Enos