

## Testimony

**Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,**

My name is Edilberto Bellizzia, and I am writing in strong support of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a Spanish teacher from Little Compton, and I care deeply about these bills.

I support this legislation because I believe language is a strength, not a barrier, for future generations who must be at the forefront of global citizens' needs. As a language educator, I recognize the importance of maintaining and expanding language programs in our communities, as they play a vital role in strengthening the multicultural identity of our nation.

***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,

Edilberto Bellizzia