



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

May 15, 2025

Testimony in Support of House Bill 5744 & House Bill 5982

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

As Assistant Professor and Director of the World Languages Education Program at Rhode Island College and a multilingual resident of Providence (HD 8), I write to urge passage of House Bill 5744: The Bilingual, Dual Language, and World Language Teacher Investment Act and House Bill 5982: The Support and Access to Bilingual Education Act. ***These two bills go hand-in-hand as the modest investment we need to grow dual language programs and prepare bilingual teachers.***

Now is the time for Rhode Island to take a stand and show real leadership by investing in our multilingual communities, students, and teachers. Dual language bilingual education programs have been proven to be the most effective program model for multilingual learners (MLLs); they work for all students, regardless of background or ability; and they are prioritized in the newly updated [RI MLL Regulations](#).¹ Rhode Island has the fastest growing population of MLLs in the nation; there are now nearly 20,000 MLLs in RI public schools.² ***H5982*** gives priority to districts with the highest concentration of MLL students, offering grant support for materials and professional learning needed to start and expand dual language programs. ***We cannot wait any longer to ensure that students have access to these essential programs, which impact not only their education but the future of our state's wellbeing and economy.***

We need more Teachers of Color and Bilingual Educators, but we can't just expect them to come to us when they have been systematically excluded and pushed out of the teaching profession for decades. ***It's up to us to make teacher education attractive and accessible.*** When schools were required to integrate students after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, Teachers and Administrators of Color were removed from schools and demoted from leadership positions, despite having more experience and higher credentials than their white counterparts.³² Latinx and bilingual teachers have additionally been pushed out by school reform bills, English-only policies, discriminatory certification policies, and the additional un-paid labor they perform

¹ <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/Regulations/Part/200-20-30-3>

² <https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/MultilingualLearners.pdf>

³ Fenwick, L. T. (2022). *Jim Crow's pink slip: The untold story of Black principal and teacher leadership*. Harvard Education Press.

using their bilingual and intercultural skills.⁴ Goal 2 of the [RI Strategic Plan for Multilingual Learner Success](#) calls for us to ***“Develop an educator pipeline strategy to ... facilitate the recruitment of bilingual educators and educators from racially diverse backgrounds” (2.6.A.). H5744 is that strategy.*** This bill will allow us to prepare over 70 new Bilingual Dual Language and World Language Teachers, who reflect the demographics of our students. Educators of Color have a positive effect on all students – improved social-emotional health, academic achievement, and increased educational persistence through college.⁵ Currently 50% of RI public school students identify as Students of Color, yet, only 13% of teachers reflect this diversity.⁶ We must invest in our multilingual community members and support them in becoming teachers. Through our work with the Coalition for a Multilingual Rhode Island and its Preparing Rhode Island's Multilingual Educators (PRIME) initiative, we are cultivating a network of candidates who are bilingual and racially and culturally diverse who are interested in becoming bilingual and world language teachers, but need financial support. ***This modest investment is not only about teacher certification; it is also about economic mobility that will help our communities thrive*** by placing under-employed multilingual adults in stable, middle-class, unionized employment.

We have made some progress through our partnership with the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner and its RI Reconnect initiative which is supporting adults in completing bilingual dual language and world language certification requirements with up to \$5,000 in non-tuition related costs. This support has helped some of my own students to pay for childcare, car repairs, and other barriers that may have prevented them from coming to class or completing their student teaching semester. ***Still many are still struggling to pay for tuition and fees with the rising cost of rent and basic needs.***

Let's invest in the growth of dual language programs and the preparation of bilingual dual language and world language teachers – ***to provide all students with the world-class education they deserve.*** I urge passage of H5744 and H5982 and thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



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⁴ Unda, M. D. C. (2023). The systematic exclusion of Latinx teachers in U.S. public schools: a literature review. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2023.2203908>

⁵ New England Secondary School Consortium. (2020). Increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the educator workforce: A call to action for leaders.

<https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/diversifyingthe-educator-workforce/>

⁶ <https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/PublicSchoolEnrollmentandDemographics.pdf>