

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is James G. Mitchell, and I am writing in strong support of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a professor of French and Italian from West Warwick RI, and I care deeply about these bills.

I support this legislation because as an applied linguist who teaches courses in second language acquisition and language pedagogy, I know what the research shows about how to help multilingual learners succeed. Even as I train future teachers of French and Spanish, I am always careful to help them understand the importance of supporting first-language development for students who speak a language other than English in order for them to develop linguistic and communicative capacities in their second or sometimes third language. Multilingual students need language support in their first language to achieve success in English. Not only will offering bilingual programs provide that support, but, as outlined below, such legislation will have far greater benefits for our state.

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.
- **Multilingualism is key to Rhode Island’s future workforce.** Over 90% of employers seek workers with language skills. Investing in bilingual education supports real-world readiness and economic development.
- **It promotes equity and addresses teacher shortages.** These bills expand high-quality programs in under-resourced districts and help build a pipeline of bilingual educators.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James G. Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James G. Mitchell  
Professor of French, Italian and Linguistics  
Salve Regina University