

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Julitza Ovalle, and I am writing in strong support of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a 6th-year Early Childhood Spanish Teacher from Providence, RI, teaching 3-6 year-olds, and I care deeply about these bills.

I support this legislation because, although the children I teach don't speak Spanish when they start, I've seen firsthand how much they grow cognitively, socially and emotionally, linguistically, and academically. Cognitively: learning a language builds stronger memory, focus, and problem-solving skills. Socially and emotionally: they gain confidence, express themselves more, and build empathy. Linguistically: they strengthen and dominate both Spanish and English language skills. Academically: they become more engaged and develop a love for learning. Spanish has become one of my students' favorite subjects. They have fun learning the language, and like mentioned, it builds their confidence to use it more frequently. I've also seen how learning another language helps them appreciate each other's differences and similarities. It creates a more inclusive, respectful classroom environment. I've seen how it brings them closer together, as they begin to acknowledge and appreciate the different cultures around them. These early experiences don't just help them in school— they prepare them to thrive in a world that is becoming more diverse every day and in the future workforce.

*“When children learn a new language, they don't just learn to speak— they learn to connect”*

*“Language learning lays the foundation for a lifetime of empathy, curiosity, and global understanding”*

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,

Julitza Ovalle