

**ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT**

**TESTIMONY ON 25-H 5744,  
AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION – BILINGUAL, DUAL LANGUAGE AND  
WORLD LANGUAGE TEACHERS INVESTMENT ACT  
May 15, 2025**

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this legislation which would establish two scholarship funds to support educators pursuing Bilingual Dual Language or World Language certifications. One scholarship fund would aid aspiring teachers studying at Rhode Island College or the University of Rhode Island, and the other would aid current, eligible teachers pursuing a certification program.

A student is considered a multilingual learner (MLL) if the language they speak at home is a language other than English. According to the National Center for Education Studies, Rhode Island has a rapidly growing MLL population.<sup>1</sup> Over the last decade, the number of MLL students in Rhode Island has nearly doubled.<sup>2</sup> As of the 2022-2023 school year, 13% of students statewide were considered MLL students.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this growth, Rhode Island faces a shortage of certified bilingual and world language teachers. Creating these scholarships will help address this gap by removing financial barriers for teaching students and educators, who have been historically underrepresented in education because of systemic or economic barriers. Investing in a diverse and linguistically talented faculty will ensure Rhode Island students receive instruction that recognizes their ancestral languages and cultural identities.

Thank you for considering our views.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf/english-learners-in-public-schools>

<sup>2</sup> The number has increased by 85% in 10 years. [https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/multilingual-learners\\_fb2024.pdf](https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/multilingual-learners_fb2024.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 18,065 students; [https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/multilingual-learners\\_fb2024.pdf](https://rikidscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/multilingual-learners_fb2024.pdf)