



Conexion Latina Newport  
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**Rhode Island General Assembly**

**To:** Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members

**From:** Yolanda Macias, Associate Director and Co Founder, Conexion Latina Newport.

**Date:** May 14, 2025

**Re:** Bills Number, **5744 and 5982.**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. **Conexion Latina Newport** is one of 60 organizations represented in the fight to pass House Bills 5744 and 5982.

Conexion Latina Newport, supports Spanish speaking community members on Aquidneck Island by connecting them to local resources that provide adult education, application and benefit support, and basic human needs such as clothing, food and housing.

I support this legislation because we work with multilingual students and we believe that multilingualism is a strength not a barrier. Research shows that dual language programs lead to stronger academic outcomes—not only for multilingual learners, but also for English-dominant students. One of the biggest complaints that we hear from families is that their children are losing their native language, and with that, connection to culture and family.

Conexion Latina receives multiple requests from community partners and local employers for help in hiring bilingual and multilingual staff, but sadly we do not have enough people in our community that are proficient in more than one language. This is because our schools do not offer multilingual education and many Spanish speakers either get stuck in Spanish language, or adopt English and lose their native language.

Additionally, we personally know of at least 10 community members who were teachers in their home countries, and have studied in the US to become teachers, but the

education and certification process is too costly to continue, and they are not able to complete it. This bill expands access to high-quality programs in communities like ours and helps build a pipeline of qualified bilingual educators by removing certification barriers. This is crucial in a district like Newport that is struggling to adapt to the huge influx of MLL students.

I respectfully urge you to support bills 5744 and 5982 and invest in the academic success, workforce readiness, and equitable opportunities of Rhode Island's multilingual students.

Thank you

Regards

Yolanda Macias.  
Associate Manager & Cofounder.