



May 15th, 2025

Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Coalition for a Multilingual Rhode Island, we urge you to support **House Bill 5744**, the *Bilingual, Dual Language, and World Language Teachers Investment Act* and **House Bill 5982**, the *Support and Access to Bilingual Education Act*.

**H5744** would create a scholarship program for multilingual undergraduates and adults pursuing certification as bilingual, dual language (BDL), and world language (WL) educators, with a focus on serving schools in Rhode Island's urban core and urban ring. It represents a crucial and timely investment in addressing our state's educator shortage—particularly the shortage of linguistically and culturally diverse educators. **H5982** would create a dual language program fund administered by RIDE for districts to start, expand, and improve PK-12 dual language programs.

Now is a critical moment for this work. Rhode Island is experiencing a widespread educator shortage, especially among multilingual and culturally diverse teachers. At the same time, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has updated its regulations for Multilingual Learners (MLLs) to prioritize BDL program models. These changes reflect several key recommendations made by the Coalition for a Multilingual Rhode Island through our in-depth public comment process—demonstrating the momentum behind this movement.

CMRI is actively collaborating with the Office of Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) and RI Reconnect to support aspiring BDL and WL educators. A Navigator will soon be hired to guide candidates through licensure pathways. Additionally, the Preparing Rhode Island Multilingual Educators (PRIME) group is focused on leveraging this policy progress and transforming it into real-world implementation, targeting immediate opportunities to expand and diversify the educator pipeline.

Building the educator pipeline and removing barriers is one piece of the puzzle, the other is investing in the creation and expansion of bilingual dual language programs, which are the gold standard for monolingual and multilingual students alike. Research consistently shows that bilingual and dual language education yields significant academic, cognitive, economic, and social-emotional benefits:

- Academic Success: Dual language students outperform peers in English assessments over time. A landmark study by Thomas & Collier (2012) found that students in long-term dual language programs achieved higher academic outcomes than their monolingual

peers<sup>1</sup>.

- Cognitive Development: Bilingual individuals exhibit enhanced executive functioning—skills essential for learning, problem-solving, and multitasking. According to Bialystok et al. (2012), these cognitive advantages persist throughout life.<sup>2</sup>
- Social Awareness and Empathy: Bilingual students are better at understanding other perspectives and navigating diverse environments. A University of Chicago study found that early exposure to multiple languages improves communication and perspective-taking skills.<sup>3</sup>
- Economic Opportunity: Bilingual workers are in high demand. The number of job postings seeking bilingual employees in the U.S. more than doubled from 2010 to 2015, according to a report from New American Economy<sup>4</sup>.

Rhode Island's multilingual community is full of talented individuals ready to teach—but systemic and financial barriers prevent them from entering the profession. We cannot afford to let capable, committed educators be left behind. **H5744** will help eliminate unnecessary barriers and build a more inclusive and sustainable teacher workforce which will then staff the programs created or expanded by **H5982**.

This is not a starting point—it's a moment of acceleration. With the foundation laid by new MLL regulations, the success of the Seal of Biliteracy (earned by 570 graduates in 2024), and the groundwork of CMRI's partnerships, Rhode Island is well-positioned to lead the nation in multilingual education.

### **House Bills 5744 and 5982 are the next step.**

We urge you to support this legislation—to invest in the educators our students need, to remove barriers to the profession, and to ensure that students have the best programs available to them so that they can be competitive in an increasingly globalized world.

Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Alicia Pratt, Coalition Coordinator  
*The Coalition for a Multilingual Rhode Island*

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas, W.P., & Collier, V.P. (2012). *Dual Language Education for a Transformed World*. Dual Language Education of New Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Bialystok, E., Craik, F.I.M., & Luk, G. (2012). *Bilingualism: Consequences for Mind and Brain*. Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 16(4), 240–250.

<sup>3</sup> Fan, S.P., Liberman, Z., Keysar, B., & Kinzler, K.D. (2015). *The Exposure Advantage: Early Exposure to a Multilingual Environment Promotes Effective Communication*. Psychological Science, 26(7), 1090–1097.

<sup>4</sup> New American Economy (2017). *Not Lost in Translation: The Growing Importance of Foreign Language Skills in the U.S. Job Market*. <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/not-lost-in-translation/>

**Coalition Member Organizations:**

Alliance to Mobilize Our Resistance (AMOR)  
Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE)  
American Association of Teachers of French RI (AATF)  
Black Lives Matter Rhode Island Political Action (BLM RI PAC)  
Cape Verdean American Community Development of R.I. (CACD of RI)  
Central Falls School District - Equity, Empowerment and Excellence for MLLs  
Dorcas International Institute of RI  
Institute for Portuguese and Lusophone World Studies at Rhode Island College  
International Engineering Program at the University of Rhode Island  
Latino Policy Institute  
M.A. in TESOL/Bilingual and Dual Language Immersion at the University of Rhode Island  
M.A. in TESOL/Bilingual Education Program at Rhode Island College  
Olneyville Neighborhood Association (ONA)  
Pangea Arts - Institute for the Advancement of the Cape Verdean Language  
Parents Leading for Educational Equity  
Preparing Rhode Island Multilingual Educators (PRIME)  
Progreso Latino, Inc.  
Providence Promise  
Refugee Dream Center  
Rhode Island for Community and Justice  
Rhode Island Foreign Language Association (RIFLA)c  
Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty  
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT  
Rhode Island School for the Deaf  
Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners (RITELL)  
Storytime Online  
Women's Refugee Care  
World Languages Education Program at Rhode Island College  
Youth in Action  
Young Voices