



May 14, 2025

Rep. Marvin L. Abney
Chairman, Finance Committee
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney:

On behalf of the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (NCLIS), I write to endorse **H 5744, Bilingual Dual Language and World Language Teachers Investment Act**, and **H 5982, Support and Access to Bilingual Education Act (SABE)**. JNCL-NCLIS, which represents over 300,000 language educators and industry professionals throughout the United States, believes strongly in the value of world language and dual language programs and applauds the authors of these two measures for seeking to support their continued growth in the state's schools.

For today's students, the ability to utilize advanced multilingual communication skills gives a competitive advantage in the increasingly global job market and will serve as a significant engine of global cooperation for future generations in international relations, trade, and economic development. The Commission on Language Learning of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences released a report in February 2017, at Congress' request, which notes that "by several measures, the United States has neglected languages in its educational curricula. . ." Because of this neglect, the demand for world language skills among U.S. employers is outpacing the supply, especially among high-demand languages. America's world language skills gap has continued to increase and is deeply concerning. World language and Dual Language programs have the power to prepare students to address the challenges and opportunities of our increasingly interconnected world.

H 5982, which would establish a dual language program fund within the Department of Education to support school dual language pilot programs, would afford more Rhode Island students the important opportunity to develop language proficiency and intercultural skills. Well-articulated and comprehensive dual language programs benefit all students, including those who will work in skilled trades or technical fields, those who will not pursue a four-year college degree, those who will continue to live in Rhode Island or elsewhere in the United States, and those with special needs, evidenced by decades of research showing improved overall academic achievement and enhanced cognitive abilities of those who study a second language. Additionally, research demonstrates dual language immersion to be the most effective model for meeting the unique needs of English Learners, supporting development in both first and second languages, and improving educational outcomes. For all of these reasons, JNCL-NCLIS supports H 5982 and urges its passage.



H 5744 addresses the state's persistent certified language educator shortage by working to streamline the world language and dual language certification processes and by establishing scholarship programs to increase the number of world language and dual language educators in urban schools. Rhode Island state data clearly demonstrates that this legislation is desperately needed as its school districts continue to struggle to find certified English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Bilingual and Dual Language (BDL) educators. The most recent state report on certified educator shortage areas found that ESOL and BDL were ranked as the third and fourth, respectively, as the biggest shortage areas. In the 2023-24 school year, emergency ESOL and BDL educator certificates represented the largest group of certificates issued, accounting for approximately 1 in every 4 certificates. H 5744 plainly addresses a major educator pipeline problem and JNCL-NCLIS urges its swift adoption.

We appreciate your time and attention to our comments and stand ready to address any questions that you have about world language and dual language immersion programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Amanda Seewald'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Amanda' and last name 'Seewald' clearly distinguishable.

Amanda Seewald
Executive Director, JNCL-NCLIS