

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Charlie Best, and I'm writing in **strong support** of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a community member and former substitute teacher from Providence, RI, and I care deeply about these bills.

I support this legislation because I've worked with several multilingual students and coworkers. These students are bright and deserving of an equal quality of education to their monolingual peers. As a former substitute teacher, I have seen firsthand how barriers to accessing a strong multilingual education have hurt both multilingual students, students whose first language is not English, and myself as an educator. I have seen how these barriers make it more difficult for effective learning and communicating. Furthermore, I believe the benefits of strong bilingual programs with only strengthen our education systems, and could put RI schools on the map.

These bills matter 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 these bills and invest in Rhode Island's multilingual future.

Thank you,  
Charlie Best