

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Cindy Miranda, I am the President of the Olneyville Neighborhood Association, Vice President of the Atlantic Mills Tenants union, and I also work for the Coalition for a Multilingual Rhode Island. I'm here in support of 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.

A few years ago, I worked at Booking.com under Agoda/Priceline. A major international company, opened an office right here in Rhode Island, the smallest state in the country with a goal to create 200 jobs in exchange for a tax incentive. Our office was right down the street at 500 Exchange st., in the same building above Blue Cross, Blue Shield.

We worked with colleagues across many countries like Singapore, Hungary, and Thailand, many of whom spoke more than 2 languages. Our trainer from Budapest spoke 5 fluently. In contrast, many of us here only spoke one. Because of that gap, we struggled to hit our goals, support partners, and help traveling clients. We had often relied on Google translate or a few bilingual colleagues.

Less than two years later, the company pulled out of Rhode Island. I was unemployed AGAIN. As a young professional living in Olneyville, that was a big blow.

That experience taught me that tax breaks alone aren't enough to attract or retain companies or talent. We need to invest in people, in global skills, in multilingualism.

These bills represent smart, strategic investments in Rhode Island's future. Countries like Singapore, with 4 official languages and a currency that's currently stronger than the U.S. dollar, are thriving. That's not a coincidence, not luck, that's strategy.

If we want Rhode Island to compete globally, retain graduates, attract industries like tech, science, and hospitality, we need a workforce that speaks the language of the world.

I'm here because the educators and language programs that I had at Bridgham Middle school (now closed) and Classical High School, gave me the language skills that still serve me today.

Every Rhode Islander deserves the same opportunity. I urge you to support this bill and invest in the future of students, workforce readiness, long-term opportunities, and Rhode Island's place in a global economy.

Thank you,
Cindy Miranda