

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Diana Ortega-Oliveira, and I am writing in strong support of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a Graduate student from East Providence, RI, and I care deeply about the bills.

I support this legislation because I work with multilingual students who deserve better support. This bill matters 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 this bill and invest in the academic success, workforce readiness, and equitable opportunities of Rhode Island's multilingual students.

Thank you,

Diana Ortega-Oliveira