

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Larissa Guido Swenson, and I am writing in strong support of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a multilingual educator, a proud Brazilian who lives in the USA, and the coordinator of the Grow Your Own Equity Fellows Project at Rhode Island College. I also serve on the Board of Directors of RIFLA. I work in Providence, where I advocate daily for our multilingual learners and future educators.

I support this legislation because I know firsthand how life-changing it is when students see their language and cultural identities honored as strengths. As a world language teacher and recent graduate of RIC's MAT in World Language Education program, I work closely with multilingual students—many of whom come from underrepresented communities—and I've witnessed the power of bilingual education to build confidence, academic success, and opportunity.

This bill matters because:

Bilingual programs help all students succeed.

Research and lived experience confirm that dual language programs benefit everyone—multilingual learners and English-dominant students alike. These programs close opportunity gaps and empower students to excel in both their home language and English.

Multilingualism is key to Rhode Island's future workforce.

As a bilingual professional myself, I know how language skills open doors. In our state, businesses and schools alike need culturally responsive, multilingual professionals. Expanding access to bilingual education strengthens Rhode Island's economy and global competitiveness.

It promotes equity and addresses teacher shortages.

Our multilingual students are concentrated in the very districts that often face the most resource constraints. House Bills 5744 and 5982 will expand access to high-quality bilingual programs in these communities and help grow the pipeline of bilingual educators—especially those who already reflect and represent the communities they serve.

I respectfully urge you to support these bills and invest in the academic success, workforce readiness, and equitable futures of Rhode Island's multilingual students.

Thank you for your time and commitment to equity in education.

Sincerely,

Larissa Guido Swenson

Coordinator, Grow Your Own Equity Fellows Project – Rhode Island College

World Language Educator | Advocate for Multilingual Learners - Providence, RI