

Dear Chair and [Senate/ House] Finance Committee Members,
My name is Mary Helldorfer-Cooney and I am writing in support of [**House/Senate**] Bill No. [**H5982/S457**]. I am a parent as well as a English Language Specialist (Teacher) living and working in North Kingstown.

I care about this because my students are smart, capable, bilingual/emerging bilingual students who deserve support. I would also love for my own children to have the opportunity to learn another language in school from a young age, and to expand their cultural and intellectual abilities through language education.

This bill matters because:

- **Bilingual programs help all students succeed.** Research shows that dual language programs lead to stronger academic outcomes—not just for multilingual learners, but for English-dominant students too. These programs close achievement gaps and promote high-level learning in two languages.
- **Multilingualism is key to Rhode Island’s future workforce.** Over 90% of employers seek workers with language skills. Investing in bilingual education prepares students for real-world careers, attracts businesses, and strengthens the state’s economy.
- **It supports equity and addresses teacher shortages.** The majority of multilingual learners in RI are concentrated in under-resourced districts. This bill helps expand programs in those communities while also building a pipeline of qualified bilingual educators by removing barriers to certification.

Please support this bill and invest in the success of our multilingual students. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary H. Cooney