

Date: 14 May 2025

From: Adriana Maria Neira Caamano

Subject: Support - House Bill 5744 and 5982 Testimony

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Adriana Maria Neira Caamano. I am a multilingual community member from West Warwick, and I am writing in strong support of House Bills **No. 5744** and **5982**, as I care deeply about these bills.

Why These Bills Matter to Me:

I support these legislations because as a former English Language Learner (ELL), who had the opportunity to learn English fluently as a Second Language upon my arrival to the U.S. – in large part due to one of my Spanish-English fluent English as a Second Language (ESL, now ELL) teachers at John F. Horgan – and further, had the opportunity to learn Italian & French at West Warwick High School, and later majored in Chinese (Mandarin) at the University of Rhode Island, I know first-hand the importance of multilingualism. Not only has it opened a world of employment opportunities for me, but it has also helped me to transfer my language knowledge cross-disciplinarily. Knowing all these languages – even if only to varying degrees of fluency – has helped me better understand cultural differences and thus, helped me stand out within my many and varied previous employment roles. If I have accomplished greater opportunities due to my sometimes-limited knowledge in various languages, I can only imagine how many more, greater opportunities would be available to me had I reached fluency in any one other language that I learned while in school. Today, Multilingualism is one of the only things that can decrease the gap between the employability of our international peers and ourselves. We have been advocating for these changes for years, and the sad reality is that the longer we take to **invest** in our population's language development and fluency, the further behind the United States will fall on the world stage.

According to the Annie E. [Casey Foundation, 2024 Kids Count Data Book Interactive](#), Rhode Island ranks 29th in Education. With all due respect, that's a shame, and something that could, on one facet, be improved with Multilingual Language Education. Why is that you ask? Because there is an abundance of data that reports that there are not only economical, but also, social and neurological benefits to knowing and speaking more than one language. Additionally, the 2017 Kroll & Dussias NIH-funded study, [***The Benefits of Multilingualism to the Personal and Professional Development of Residents of the US***](#), does a fantastic job of demonstrating the real and measurable benefits of multilingualism,

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as well as disproving long-held myths of multilingualism's negative impacts (of which there are literally **none**).

Lastly, regarding the Economy and Employment, [in 2023, Forbes](#) reported that:

“...according to one research [study](#), those possessing the ability to speak and understand a second language **boosted their salary** and job prospects by as much as **35 percent**.

Another [study](#) unearthed that **nine out of 10 employers rely on** employees that **speak a language other than English**, particularly when considering **business development and expansion into new markets**, with **56 percent** reporting that their demand for bilingual and multilingual speakers will soar over the next five years.”

Why these Bills Matter for Rhode Islanders:

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 read the short, attached appendices, and to support these bills that invest in the academic success, workforce readiness, and equitable opportunities of Rhode Island's multilingual students.

Thank you,

Adriana Maria Neira Caamano

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