

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Nicole King, and I am writing in strong support of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a teacher educator and community member from Cranston, RI, and I care deeply about these bills.

I support this legislation for a multitude of reasons. For brevity, I'll briefly mention three.

First and foremost, I believe that the languages, cultures, and personal experiences that students bring into classrooms are incredible learning strengths that enrich the educational experiences of everyone in the room – peers and teachers alike. I have watched students come to life when writing personal narratives that include dialogue in Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, and French. Language is deeply connected to both memory and sense making. Creating spaces in which students feel safe to share their linguistic and cultural assets and heritage is a privilege as a teacher, because it is how you truly get to know someone.

Second, Rhode Island is uniquely diverse. Multilingual learners are the fastest growing demographic of all learners in the United States. The rate at which they are growing in Rhode Island is faster than any other state. As the rate of multilingual students grows the rate of teachers and programs who are prepared to teach with excellence and equity needs to grow too. These bills help the teachers in RI support all of their learners.

And third, the most effective pedagogical approach for multilingual students is bilingual programming. In bilingual programs, students learn how to leverage linguistic knowledge across languages through bilingual words walls, cognate awareness, bilingual writing and books, and so much more, as they are taught by master teachers with pedagogical expertise in teaching language and content bilingually. With these bills, we have an opportunity to truly support the multilingual teachers to have access to bilingual professional development to hone and enhance their pedagogy and to demonstrate financial commitment to the success of our growing multigonal student population.

Put simply this bill matters because:

- **Bilingual programs help all students succeed.** Research shows that dual language programs lead to stronger academic outcomes—for all learners in the room.
- **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.
- **It promotes equity and addresses teacher shortages.** This bill expands access to high-quality programs in under-resourced 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,

Nicole King

Nicole King, PhD