

Dear Chairman Abney and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Sarah Hesson, and I am writing in strong support of House Bills No. 5744 and 5982. I am a professor of TESOL and Bilingual Education at RIC and a mom to a 6-year-old emergent bilingual from Providence, and I care deeply about these bills.

I support this legislation because all bilingual children have the right to learn bilingually.

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,

Sarah Hesson



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