

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

My name is Tatiana Baena, and I am writing in strong support of both House Bill No. H5744 and House Bill No. H5982. As a City Council Member in Central Falls, founder of Mundialito, and owner of various businesses, I have seen firsthand the power of bilingual education to transform students' lives and prepare them for success in a global economy. As a Colombian-American, I understand the value of bilingualism, not only in preserving culture but also in equipping students with essential skills that will benefit them for years to come.

These bills matter because:

- **Bilingual programs help all students succeed:** In Central Falls, where many students speak a language other than English at home, bilingual education is essential. Dual language programs provide benefits for multilingual learners and English-dominant students alike. Research shows that these programs lead to stronger academic outcomes, close achievement gaps, and promote critical thinking. These benefits are not just for multilingual learners; they extend to all students who gain valuable language skills that will serve them in both academic and real-world environments.
- **It promotes equity and addresses teacher shortages:** Over 40% of students in urban districts speak a language other than English at home, and the demand for bilingual educators has never been higher. This bill helps address the critical shortage of bilingual teachers by creating pathways for certification and expanding bilingual programs, particularly in under-resourced communities. By investing in bilingual education and teacher preparation, we ensure that these students receive the high-quality education they deserve.
- **It strengthens our economy:** Rhode Island's workforce increasingly demands bilingual employees. As an entrepreneur, I see the growing need for employees who can communicate in multiple languages to serve a global economy. Bilingual education prepares students to meet this demand and helps attract businesses to the state, ensuring Rhode Island remains competitive in a rapidly changing world.
- **It supports excellence:** Bilingual education programs foster better academic results, stronger critical thinking, and greater global readiness. By expanding these programs and investing in teacher training, these bills will create more opportunities for Rhode Island's students to excel academically and develop the skills they need to succeed in an interconnected world.

Please support House Bill No. H5744 and House Bill No. H5982 to invest in bilingual education and the future of Rhode Island's students, workforce, and economy. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Tatiana Baena
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Founder, Mundialito
Owner, booth. and Better Perspective Consulting