



May 12, 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: H 7389

On behalf of the National Education Association of Rhode Island and our 12,000 members, I write in strong support of H 7389, the "Support and Access to Bilingual Education Act." This legislation represents a meaningful and forward-looking investment in Rhode Island's multilingual learners, educators, and public schools. By establishing a dedicated bilingual education support fund and creating pathways to expand high-quality dual language programming, this bill recognizes the linguistic and cultural assets students bring into our classrooms and provides schools with the resources necessary to meet their educational needs.

Rhode Island's student population continues to become increasingly multilingual and diverse. Many districts across the state serve substantial populations of multilingual learners, yet too often schools lack the staffing capacity, instructional resources, and programmatic support necessary to fully implement high-quality bilingual and dual language education programs. H 7389 directly addresses these challenges by providing targeted state support for the development, expansion, and sustainability of bilingual instructional models in districts with high incidences of multilingual learners.

Importantly, this legislation recognizes that successful bilingual education programs require more than simply good intentions. Schools need trained and certified bilingual dual language educators, strong partnerships with higher education institutions and community organizations, professional development opportunities, and access to high-quality curricular materials. The bill appropriately dedicates significant funding toward expanding certification pathways for bilingual dual language and world language teachers, helping to address longstanding workforce shortages that limit program growth in many districts.

The bill also creates important opportunities for collaboration between local education agencies, institutions of higher education, and community-based organizations. These partnerships can strengthen recruitment pipelines, support multilingual individuals pursuing certification, and help districts build sustainable dual language programs that reflect the needs of their local communities. Supporting multilingual individuals in becoming certified educators is especially important, as students benefit greatly from seeing educators who share and understand their linguistic and cultural experiences.

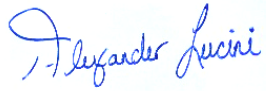
Equally significant is the bill's emphasis on program quality and accountability. Funding is limited to programs that adhere to high-quality dual language program standards and comply with existing multilingual learner education regulations. This ensures that state investments are directed toward evidence-based instructional models that promote academic achievement, bi-literacy, and long-term educational success for students.

Finally, the appropriation included in this legislation represents a practical and strategic investment in educational equity. By helping districts expand access to bilingual programming and addressing educator

shortages, Rhode Island can better fulfill its responsibility to provide meaningful educational access to multilingual learners while strengthening outcomes for students and communities statewide.

For these reasons, NEARI respectfully urges the committee to support H 7389.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alexander Lucini". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue rectangular background.

Alexander Lucini
Government Relations Director, NEARI