

Dear House Finance Committee Members:

I'm Dr. Sandra Silva-Enos and I am writing in support of **House** Bill No. **[H7389/S2555]**. I am a Peruvian Immigrant and Assistant Professor of Secondary Education at Providence College.

I care deeply about this issue because I was once a student identified as an ELL. My parents were advised to place me in English-only classes to “do less damage” to my language development. Because they had experienced discrimination and mistreatment due to their accents and limited English vocabulary, they followed that advice in hopes of protecting me from similar experiences.

What ultimately happened, however, was that I was placed in learning environments with limited resources and support because many of my teachers did not have a strong understanding of second language acquisition. Research consistently shows that students' home languages are strengths, not barriers. Multilingual learners bring a wealth of knowledge through their home languages, and dual language programs allow students to maintain an integral part of their personal and familial identity while also developing proficiency in a partner language.

My parents did not have someone telling them that our Spanish was beautiful or that it could actually support my English development through metalinguistic connections. Passing this bill would provide opportunities for teacher training and the development of programs that can more effectively support the increasingly diverse student and family population in Rhode Island schools.

Please support this bill and invest in the success of our multilingual students. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sandra Silva-Enos