

From: Maria Pedraza-Padin  
809 York Avenue  
Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02861  
May 11, 2026

To: Senate Education Committee

**Re: Oppose Senate Bill 2787 – Rhode Island Needs More Bilingual Public School Opportunities**

Dear Chair Gallo and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Maria Pedraza-Padin, and I am a Community Member from Pawtucket. I am writing to respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 2787.

Rhode Island's students and families benefit from having access to diverse public school models, **especially bilingual and dual-language** learning environments that reflect the communities they serve. Senate Bill 2787 would effectively block the opening of new charter public schools in Rhode Island and, most concerningly, would retroactively impact schools already moving through the approval process, including De La Comunidad Bilingual School.

For many families, bilingual education is not simply a preference. It is an opportunity for students to strengthen academic achievement, maintain cultural and linguistic connections, and prepare for success in an increasingly multilingual world. Rhode Island has a growing multilingual population, yet families still have limited access to high-quality bilingual public school options.

De La Comunidad Bilingual School represents the kind of innovative public school model our state should be encouraging: one that seeks to expand opportunity, celebrate multilingualism, and create strong partnerships with families and communities. Blocking schools like this from opening sends the wrong message to families who have been advocating for more inclusive and culturally responsive educational opportunities.

I am a proud graduate of a public bilingual secondary school in Puerto Rico. Attending a bilingual school strengthened my language skills in both Spanish and English and prepared me academically and socially for college and beyond. Learning in two languages allowed me to develop strong cognitive skills, adaptability, and confidence, tools that have supported me throughout my educational and professional journey.

Language access matters deeply to my family because it allows us to stay connected to our culture, our history, and to one another, while also opening doors to opportunity. Being bilingual

is not just about communication; it is about identity, belonging, and economic mobility. When students are able to learn in their home language while developing proficiency in English, they are better able to engage in learning, build meaningful relationships, and see themselves reflected in their schools.

Research consistently shows that bilingual and biliterate students experience cognitive benefits such as stronger executive functioning, improved problem-solving skills, and greater brain flexibility. Bilingual education also brings long-term economic advantages, including increased career opportunities and higher earning potential. Social-emotionally, bilingual students benefit from higher self-esteem and a stronger sense of belonging because their language and culture are valued rather than erased. Rhode Island's students deserve more public school models that recognize and celebrate the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of our communities.

I believe Rhode Island should continue investing in educational opportunity and innovation while maintaining strong accountability standards for all public schools. Investing in bilingual and culturally responsive education is an investment in student success, family engagement, and a stronger, more inclusive future for our state.

Please oppose Senate Bill 2787 and support a public education system that values multilingual learners, educational opportunity, and family voice. Families deserve access to learning environments that meet the needs of their children and communities.

Sincerely,

Maria Pedraza-Padin  
Pawtucket Community Member