

May 19, 2026

Dear Chair DiPalma & Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I'm writing to you in strong support of Senate bill 2555, also known as the "SABE Act."

We find ourselves facing a federal administration wielding unchecked power in service to white supremacy, xenophobia, and exploitative capitalism. Emboldened by the actions and rhetoric of Trump, his ideologues and lackies, aggrieved individuals are taking the opportunity to harass immigrant communities, both individually and by joining the swelling ranks of *ICE* officers. In addition to overt violence in our streets, places of worship, and schools, policies and funding decisions undermine the integrity of public education, further erode our healthcare and democratic systems and denigrate our shared environment in pursuit of unbridled profit for a wealthy few.

Our state's public education system has already suffered vast divestment from federal funding cuts and will face deeper challenges as those in power dismantle the Department of Education and the systems that are supposed to enforce the rights of homeless, low-income, LGBTQIA, Black, indigenous, and immigrant students and families.

My wife is a certified Multilingual Learning Specialist teaching in Providence, with over 20 years of direct classroom teaching experience in Rhode Island's working class and immigrant communities. She arrived in Rhode Island as an Arabic speaking refugee of the Gulf War in 1990 and learned English in Rhode Island elementary schools.

My children attend a dual language (English-Spanish) public elementary school in Providence, and are gaining fluency in a second language, while absorbing what they can of Arabic, their linguistic heritage. Being able to understand the language and connected culture of their classmates, friends, and neighbors in Providence, and to be recognized for their own cultural and linguistic heritage as Palestinians, is invaluable to their development. All students, families, and teachers in Rhode Island's education system deserve the same dignity and opportunity.

Expanding training opportunities for multilingual teachers and multilingual programming in our public schools is a paramount duty of our legislature, especially now in the face of authoritarianism, which is rooted in white supremacy. Given the immense subsidies allocated to the wealthy and those who profit from the exploitation of our working people, land, and resources in Rhode Island, the investment outlined in this legislation is just the starting point for reinventing public education in our state and providing the resources our students, families, teachers, and staff deserve.

Sincerely,
Christopher Samih-Rotondo
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