



May 19th, 2026

Good afternoon members of the Senate Finance Committee,

The youth of Young Voices wish to express their strong support of the S2555 Bilingual Support and Access (SABE) Act, which would allocate resources to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish a bilingual education support fund for local schools. As young people who frequently come from multilingual and English-learning households, this bill is highly important to our growth as individuals and the future of young learners throughout our state.

In Rhode Island, multilingual students speak 106 different languages. The growing linguistic diversity of our state showcases the rich cultural background of Rhode Island's families and contributes to our shared economic and educational success. Yet despite the growing number of multilingual learners in Rhode Island, access to high-quality dual language programs remain limited. During the 2024-2025 school year, bilingual and two-way dual language programs were only offered in the Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence school districts, and even there, only 8% of MLL students are even enrolled in dual language programs. Our families need the resources required to elevate our language proficiency goals and meet students where they are at, which the SABE Act's expanded funding would provide.

As students, it is important to us that our instructors also reflect the rich cultural background and knowledge of our communities. Yet only about 1% of Rhode Island public school teachers and instructional coordinators currently hold an active Bilingual, Dual Language, or English to Speakers of Other Languages certification. Our educators need the additional training and cultural competency to reach our increasingly multilingual peers. It falls to critical legislation such as the SABE Act to make those opportunities possible.

We hope that you make the right decision and pass S2555, for the benefit of Rhode Island youth and the flourishing of all.

Thank you for your time and attention today.

Sincerely,

The Youth of Young Voices