



COALITION FOR A
MULTILINGUAL **RI**

May 14th, 2024

Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance,
On behalf of the Coalition for a Multilingual Rhode Island we'd like to support House Bill 7594 "Bilingual, Dual Language, and World Language Teacher Investment Act." If passed, this act would establish a scholarship program for bi/multilingual undergraduates and adults interested in becoming bilingual / dual language and world language educators at schools in the urban core or urban ring areas of RI. Rhode Island stands to benefit immediately from this legislation as there has been a historic shortage of educators, both nationwide and in our state, and this would decrease the financial barriers and create alternate pathways and programming for licensure, particularly for adults and non-traditional learners.

Passage of House Bill 7594 is imperative for growing the bilingual workforce in our state. Rhode Island has a wealth of multilingual adults who need clear guidance and financial support to obtain licensure. While we see enclaves of school administrators traveling to Spain and other countries to seek bilingual teachers to meet the needs of our growing Multilingual Learner (MLL) population, we are ignoring the immense talent that exists here in Rhode Island.

There is increased demand for Bilingual/Dual Language and World Language Teachers, as evidenced by the growing number of emergency certifications issued in recent years. According to the Annenberg RISSA Report on Rhode Island Statewide Staffing, 734 current teachers are new hires. New hires are on average 38 years old, 16% are teachers of color, and 52% are certified in high-needs areas. In comparison, returning teachers are on average 47 years old, 7% are teachers of color, and 41% are certified in high-needs areas. In short: new hires are younger, more diverse, and more likely to be in high-needs areas. But turnover is higher for teachers in these same categories.

Preparing the next generation of teachers is critical. 40% of the workforce is 50+ when it was 30% a decade ago. Increased funding allocated to support MLLs often goes toward professional development initiatives, when it should prioritize teacher certification. Teacher certification fulfills professional development requirements, while professional development alone does not fulfill certification requirements. Furthermore, while there has been some emphasis on ESOL certification, we know that this certification alone is insufficient to meet student needs. Students require bilingual, dual language and world language teachers to improve

academic literacy in their home languages and establish a comprehensive multilingual pre-K to 12 system.

With that, I urge you to support the passage of this bill. Uplift our multilingual communities. Embrace the linguistic and cultural diversity of our students. Sustain our heritage languages. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alicia Pratt / Coordinator
Coalition for a Multilingual Rhode Island

Alliance to Mobilize Our Resistance (AMOR)
Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education (ARISE)
American Association of Teachers of French RI (AATF)
Black Lives Matter Rhode Island Political Action Committee (BLM RI PAC)
Capeverdean American Community Development of R.I. (CACD of RI)
Central Falls School District - Equity, Empowerment and Excellence for MLLs
Dorcas International Institute of RI
Institute for Portuguese and Lusophone World Studies at Rhode Island College
International Engineering Program at the University of Rhode Island
Latino Policy Institute
M.A. in TESOL/Bilingual and Dual Language Immersion at the University of Rhode Island
M.A. in TESOL/Bilingual Education Program at Rhode Island College
Olneyville Neighborhood Association (ONA)
Pangea Arts - Institute for the Advancement of the Cape Verdean Language
Parents Leading for Educational Equity
Progreso Latino, Inc.
Providence Promise
Rhode Island for Community and Justice
Rhode Island Foreign Language Association (RIFLA)
Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Rhode Island School for the Deaf
Rhode Island Teachers of English Language Learners (RITELL)
Storytime Online
Women's Refugee Care
World Languages Education Program at Rhode Island College
Youth in Action