



Testimony in Support

House Bill 7594 - Bilingual, Dual Language, and World Language Teacher Investment Act

May 14, 2024

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

The Latino Policy Institute is writing to express our strong support for H7594, which would establish a scholarship program to promote and increase the number of bilingual dual language and world language teachers. For years, the Latino Policy Institute has strongly advocated increased and sustainable dual language access for all Rhode Island children. Through this legislation, we support establishing a sustainable program to support educators and, as a result, our children.

Research on dual language education has demonstrated that students, regardless of race, language, special needs, or income, receive social, academic, cognitive, and economic benefits through participation in well-implemented, long-term programs. When our children, educators, and families face increased stress and mental health barriers, investing in education that fosters empathy and social understanding, cognitive flexibility, decision-making, problem-solving, and attentiveness is imperative.

Only 3% of multilingual learners (MLL) in Rhode Island are enrolled in dual language programs. However, recent data shows that during the 2020-2021 school year, 70% of MLL/EL students in Rhode Island attended school in the four core cities. In Central Falls, 45% of students were MLL/EL students; in Providence, 33% were MLL/EL students; in Pawtucket, 16% were MLL/EL students; and in Woonsocket, 11% of students were MLL/EL students. In the next decade, Rhode Island will continue to experience the rapidly changing needs of the growing MLL community throughout the state. Investing in MLLs today is an investment that will benefit our state tomorrow. Lastly, another benefit of this program is that dual language programs are cost-neutral because the same teacher teaches in both languages or a two-teacher model; one teacher teaches in English, and the other teaches in the partner language. However, more funding is needed if the state wants to offer more opportunities for students to enroll.

These benefits underscore the importance of investing in dual language education to foster academic success and meet students' diverse needs. We encourage the General Assembly to support this important legislation.

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