



May 14, 2024

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House, Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support of H-7594

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the Committee

At Progreso Latino, our mission is to help Rhode Island's Latino and immigrant communities achieve greater self-sufficiency and socio-economic progress by providing transformational programs that support personal growth and social change. Progreso Latino writes in strong support of HB No. 7594

This legislation represents a crucial step forward in addressing the diverse linguistic needs of students in our state and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all. Research consistently demonstrates the cognitive, academic, and socio-cultural benefits of bilingual education, particularly for students from linguistically diverse backgrounds. By providing access to qualified bilingual and multilingual teachers, we can effectively support the academic success and socio-emotional well-being of students whose first language may not be English.

Furthermore, expanding the pool of certified bilingual, dual language, and world language teachers is essential for addressing the persistent shortage of educators in urban and urban ring schools. These schools often serve a higher proportion of English language learners and students from immigrant families, who face unique educational challenges that require specialized support. By investing in the recruitment and training of teachers who possess linguistic and cultural competencies, we can better meet the diverse needs of students and promote their academic achievement.

This legislation is especially crucial for Providence, Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket which have the highest number of multilingual learners across the state. Despite the proven success of Dual Language Bilingual Education and the fast-growing multilingual learner population, programs in Rhode Island have not grown to serve the needs of our state. Investment is needed now to ensure that Multilingual Learners have access to the programs with the highest rate of success, and that all students are provided with a pathway to becoming multilingual.

Central Falls has invested \$108M toward a new high school for our diverse population of students, it is important that we must also strategize a system in which students can excel academically by building a strong multilingual teacher workforce. With our new institution and providing multilingual instructors students will pursue their education in an environment created to foster their success.

Thank you to representative Morales and his cosponsors for their leadership on this bill. I urge you to support this impactful legislation. Thank you.

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On behalf of Progreso Latino
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