



**RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT AFL-CIO**

To: House Finance Committee
From: James Parisi, Field Representative
Date: May 14, 2024
Re: **Bilingual, Dual Language and World Language Teachers Investment Act**
Testimony in Support of 2024-H 7594 (Representative Morales et al.)

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals supports H 7594 and urges passage of the legislation. The bill provides a smart investment in Rhode Island's workforce to generate more individuals who hold specified teaching certificates. The bill creates a scholarship program to increase the number of bilingual dual language and world language teachers in our state.

As drafted, H 7594 would provide an initial \$2 million to the scholarship fund to aid undergraduate students who are pursuing a college degree to prepare for and obtain the specified teaching certificate. Eligibility guidelines include a requirement that the student attend a public higher education institution, be eligible for in-state tuition, maintain a 2.5 grade point average, and commit to teach in an urban core or urban ring school district for a year for each year the student receives the scholarship. The Office of Postsecondary Commissioner would administer the program.

H 7594 also provides \$1 million in initial funding to support the existing teacher workforce seeking to earn a bilingual dual language or world language certificate. Thus, the bill not only supports undergraduate students, but also provides financial incentives to encourage teachers to obtain additional professional credentials that are in demand in our public education system.

The RIFTHP supports both aspects of the scholarship program. We particularly appreciate the bill sponsor proposing a scholarship program to allow teachers to continue their education and earn an additional certificate. As I have testified in the House Finance Committee repeatedly over the years, there is no state funding to support teacher professional development, Local school districts rarely provide tuition assistance for their employees. Representative Morales' proposal would be a significant step forward in state investment in the teaching workforce.

There are not enough regularly certified bilingual dual language or world language teachers. Our state is over-reliant on teachers holding an emergency certificate who have not had the specific training to teach this growing student population. This bill would be a significant step forward in resolving a staffing challenge in our schools.

The RIFTHP urges passage of H 7594.

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