

Testimony in Support of HB7594
An Act Relating to Education – Bilingual, Dual Language and World
Language Teachers Investment Act
House Committee on Finance
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The Economic Progress Institute supports Representative Morales’s HB7594, which would authorize the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish a scholarship program to promote and increase the number of bilingual, dual language, and world language teachers in urban and urban ring schools. This bill would remove financial barriers to certification, allowing for a more diverse teacher pipeline.

All students deserve equal opportunities to learn regardless of language barriers. Currently, Rhode Island is underinvesting in its multilingual learners. Rhode Island’s multilingual learner population has grown by 62.8 percent since 2015 and currently makes up 12.5 percent of the overall student population.¹ However, only 3 percent of multilingual learners are enrolled in dual language programs while the rest are in English-only programs.

Dual language programs encourage students to engage with materials in two different languages. These programs embrace the culture of multilingual learners and encourage them to see their language skills as an asset.² Dual language programs have been shown to improve English reading proficiency, decrease dropout rates, increase the likelihood of going to college, and improve economic outcomes for multilingual students.³

To grow more dual language programs, the state must invest in recruiting more bilingual educators, especially given the current shortage of teachers. Providence alone currently has 72 unfilled bilingual or dual language educator positions. Rhode Island has a wealth of multilingual adults who need clear guidance and financial support to obtain teaching certificates, and the scholarship program instituted through this bill would make that available.

HB7594 would improve equity in Rhode Island by removing financial barriers for multilingual teacher certifications and increasing the diversity of Rhode Island’s teaching population. The bill would also improve educational outcomes for multilingual learners, who tend to belong to historically marginalized communities.⁴ The Economic Progress Institute strongly urges passage of HB7594.

¹ [Funding for Multilingual Learners in RI’s K-12 System | RIPEC 2023](#)

² [Multilingual Learners in Rhode Island | RI Kids Count 2023](#)

³ [Bilingual Education in the United States | Gándara and Escamilla 2017](#)

⁴ [Promoting the Education Success of Children and Youth Learning English | Promising Futures 2017](#)