

Dear Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Marco A. Lima. I am currently a Freshman at Brown University but am also an alumni from PPSD. I am writing in support of House Bill No.7594. Prior to coming to college I was a youth member of Young Voices and the Coalition for A Multilingual RI. Throughout this time I noticed how the state has effectively failed our MLLs. Whether it be a lack of resources, teachers, or insufficient professional development, the reality is our multilingual learners are not receiving the care nor resources they deserve.

I am in full support of this bill because it increases the number of dual language teachers through a scholarship program. Throughout my first year of college I have taken multiple courses to better understand how to support MLLs in Providence. However, one common trend that I found is that students in Dual Language Education are more likely to succeed than those in a typical ELL program. For example students in bilingual programs typically outperform their peers in English reading by 7 months in fifth grade and by 9 months in eighth grade. This is especially important as we begin to think about ways in which we can uplift college access for students.

The benefits of dual language programs don't stop there. The expansion of programs such as these by providing more pathways for teachers to become certified can also boost the state's economy. With a short-term mindset, this will allow more teachers to qualify for roles at Dual Language schools. On the other hand, this will prepare more students, regardless of home language background, to learn multiple languages. This will later create for a truly multilingual workforce, which is a trait many employers both locally and nationally are looking for.

To conclude, the passage of this legislation is incredibly important in supporting multilingual learners across the state. By establishing a scholarship program for bilingual dual language teachers we are ensuring that there will be a growing workforce. Additionally, this is a direct investment in our students and enables them to become competitive members of our workforce.

I hope you will join me in supporting House Bill No. 7594. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.