



The majority of the world’s population is bilingual or multilingual. High-quality multilingual education, starting in the early grades or in preschool, effectively promotes English language acquisition and proficiency while also building proficiency in a child’s native language. **Being bilingual or multilingual is associated with increased economic and social opportunities and improved executive function skills that contribute to academic success.** Multilingualism is also associated with a delay or prevention of cognitive challenges that are connected to aging.

In the 2018-2019 school year, MLL/EL students were 10% (13,792) of total students, and 39% of all ML/EL students in Rhode Island were in grades preschool to grade three. During the 2018-2019 school year, bilingual and two-way/dual language programs were offered in the Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and South Kingstown school districts, Rhode Island School for the Deaf and at the International Charter School.

Investments in a dual language program fund and a specialist in world language and dual language instruction could help expand dual language programs to additional schools and districts. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports efforts to expand children’s access to high-quality dual language programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We urge support for this bill.