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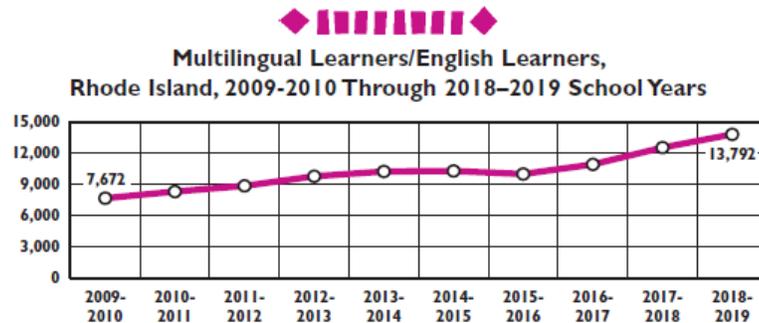
**Testimony Re: S355 Re: Curriculum-Dual Language Model Policy  
 Senate Education Committee**

**April 14, 2021**

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for Senate Bill 355 which would require the Rhode Island Department of Education to create a model policy and timeline to assist school districts in implementing a dual language immersion program.

The demographics of students in Rhode Island public schools has become increasingly diverse. In the 2018-2019 school year in Rhode Island, MLL/EL students were 10% (13,792) of total students, and 39% of all MLL/EL students in Rhode Island were in grades preschool to grade three. The number of MLL/EL students in Rhode Island has nearly doubled (increased by 93%) from the 2009-2010 to 2018-2019 school year.



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2009-2010 through 2018-2019 school years.

**Multilingual students are an incredible asset to all of Rhode Island.**

However, research shows that we have much work to do to ensure that these students have what they need to succeed. Disparities in academic outcomes by language status are well known by this committee. In Rhode Island in 2019, 20% of third grade MLL/EL students met expectations in reading compared to 52% of third grade Non-Multilingual Learners and 11% of third grade MLL/EL students met expectations in math compared to 40% of third grade Non-Multilingual Learners on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)*. Multilingual Learners need additional supports in order to achieve proficiency in reading and math.

High-quality dual language 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. Dual language programs can significantly improve academic proficiency, decrease high school dropout rates, increase the likelihood of going to college, and improve economic outcomes for MLL/EL students.

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.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports efforts to expand children's access to high-quality dual language programs and to increase the capacity of the school districts who serve them.

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

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