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Testimony Re: Senate Bill 2953 Re: Seal of Biliteracy
Senate Education Committee

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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 2953 and thank Chair Cano for sponsoring this bill and Senators Kallman, Murray and Acosta for co-sponsoring. This bill would allow high school students who receive the Silver or Gold Seal of Biliteracy to earn college credit toward a minor or major degree in a world language at CCRI, RIC, and URI.

The majority of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual. Being bilingual is associated with increased economic and social opportunities. Course offerings that draw on the cultural and language assets of Multilingual Learners and engage them in rigorous academic instruction will help Multilingual Learners succeed.

Rhode Island's new accountability system includes a Post-Secondary Success indicator that will measure students' success in demonstrating achievements beyond those needed to earn a high school diploma. Starting with the Class of 2021, this includes a Seal of Biliteracy which will be awarded to students who demonstrate proficiency in English and one or more other world languages.

Between 2020 and 2030, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring less education. Many students, especially Multilingual Learners, face barriers to college enrollment and success including limited access to advanced coursework and opportunities to earn college credits while enrolled in high school. Rhode Island can help address these barriers and improve college access by ensuring that all students have equitable access to college credit earning opportunities.

This bill would validate the importance of biliteracy and could help to improve college access, affordability, and success for Multilingual Learners. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT support efforts to help Multilingual Learners achieve their dream of college and at the same time improve the economic prosperity of our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.