



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT

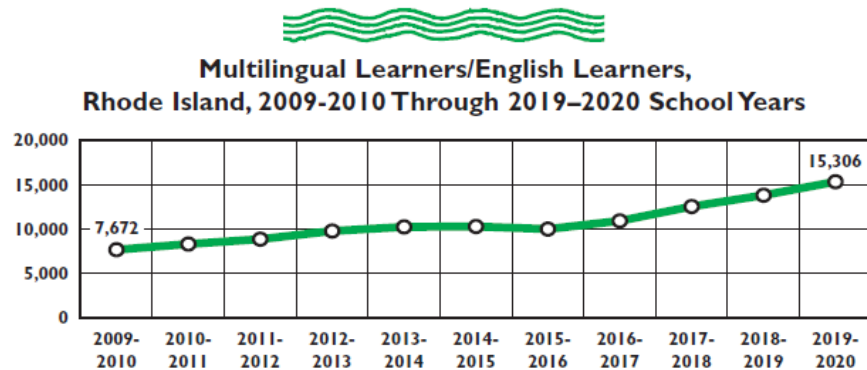
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Testimony Re: S2284 Re: Curriculum-Dual Language Model Policy Senate Education Committee

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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 2284 and thank Senator Quezada for sponsoring this important bill and Senators Cano, Murray, and Euer for co-sponsoring. This bill 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.



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2009-2010 through 2019-2020 school years.

The demographics of students in Rhode Island public schools has become increasingly diverse. In the 2019-2020 school year in Rhode Island, Multilingual Learner/English Learner (MLL/EL) students were 11% (15,306) of total students, and 37% 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 99%) from the 2009-2010 to 2019-2020 school year.

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 2021, 12% of third grade MLL/EL students met expectations in reading compared to 45% of third grade Non-MLL/EL students and 6% of third grade MLL/EL students met expectations in math compared to 28% of third grade Non MLL/ELL students 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 home 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. Multilingualism is an asset to all and can increase one's employability.

During the 2019-2020 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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