



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 24-S 2842, AM ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION – BILL OF RIGHTS FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS ACT April 3, 2024

As an organization which has consistently advocated for the rights of multilingual learners and been involved in litigation seeking to ensure that school districts meet their legal obligations to properly educate these students, we are strongly in support of this legislation which would implement a bill of rights to protect these learners in schools. In accordance with the principle that our public educational institutions should be equitably serving all students regardless of their backgrounds, this legislation would ensure that multilingual learners and their families are informed of their educational rights and provided a meaningful educational experience.

Among other aspects of the bill, we wish to highlight our support for its codification of the constitutional principle that students have a right to attend school regardless of their immigration status and for barring schools from seeking information about that status. We also commend the requirement that school committees provide translation services at school committee meetings upon request. Some of the other guarantees in this “bill of rights” help codify school districts’ obligations under federal law to appropriately teach MLL students.¹

At the core of educational equity is that guarantee that all students are treated in a nondiscriminatory manner. This legislation validates this for a section of the population which may have unique needs, and ensures that their parents or guardians are provided the tools to effectively advocate for their needs.

For these reasons, we support passage of this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ We would offer one minor amendment to the bill. One of the rights [#11, on Page 3, lines 3-4] provides for the “right of a multilingual learner student to have equal access to all core grade-level subject matter.” The word “core” could possibly be interpreted to limit access to academic subject matter to just core courses, so we would suggest combining #10 and #11 to provide that these students will have “equal access to all grade level subject matter and school programming.”