

2025 -- S 0785

=====
LC002351
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BILINGUAL, DUAL LANGUAGE AND WORLD
LANGUAGE TEACHERS INVESTMENT ACT

Introduced By: Senators Vargas, Lawson, Mack, DiPalma, Zurier, McKenney, and
Acosta

Date Introduced: March 14, 2025

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Findings of fact.

2 (1) The demographic divide in which there are less bilingual, dual language and world
3 language teachers and more multilingual students is of growing public concern.

4 (2) Currently, multilingual students comprise twenty-seven percent (27%) of students in
5 Rhode Island's urban core student population and sixteen percent (16%) of Rhode Island's
6 statewide student population (Rhode Island Kids Count, 2024).

7 (3) Only two percent (2%) of multilingual learners are enrolled in dual language programs
8 and comprise a large portion of urban core and urban ring school students.

9 (5) A common explanation of why the demographic divide is so concerning is that
10 multilingual students benefit most from instruction from teachers that are certified in bilingual, dual
11 language and world language.

12 (6) More students benefiting from dual language instruction may, in turn, translate into
13 better academic outcomes such as student motivation, improved interest in academics, consistent
14 attendance, and grades.

15 (7) Bilingual, dual language and world language teachers represent excellent role models
16 and provide a continuous source of inspiration for not only multilingual students, but all students.

17 (8) Linguistic separation and isolation can be countered through significant investment in
18 bilingual, dual language and world language teachers that will deliver academic content through

1 multiple languages.

2 (9) Students learn important societal lessons through the example of cooperative interracial
3 and interethnic relationships among teachers.

4 (10) It is in the best interest of the state, its residents, and its students to develop and support
5 certified bilingual, dual language and world language teachers. The Rhode Island Blueprint for a
6 Multilingual Learner Success (2021) calls for a nimble system that "Secures and allocates human
7 and fiscal resources to support high-quality core instruction to meet the diverse needs of MLLs,
8 including professional learning opportunities for all teachers and administrators."

9 (11) Support for increased preparation and training of bilingual, dual language and world
10 language teachers can successfully be leveraged by providing direct financial support to public
11 institutions of higher education in Rhode Island working to increase the number of certified
12 bilingual, dual language and world language teachers.

13 SECTION 2. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by
14 adding thereto the following chapter:

15 CHAPTER 117

16 BILINGUAL AND DUAL LANGUAGE AND WORLD LANGUAGE TEACHERS

17 INVESTMENT ACT

18 **16-117-1. Short title.**

19 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Bilingual and Dual Language and
20 World Language Teachers Investment Act".

21 **16-117-2. Definitions.**

22 When used in this chapter, the following words and phrases shall have the following
23 meanings:

24 (1) "Bilingual and dual language educator" means a person who is certified by the
25 department of elementary and secondary education as a bilingual and dual language teacher in any
26 grade in accordance with the department of education regulation 200-RICR-20-20-1.

27 (2) "Eligible teacher" means a full-time teacher certified to teach in a kindergarten through
28 grade twelve (K-12) school by the department of elementary and secondary education and is
29 actively teaching within a public school located in the urban core or urban ring.

30 (3) "FAFSA" means the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form;

31 (4) "Initial teacher certification programs" means Rhode Island approved educator
32 preparation programs that lead to full initial certification in Rhode Island.

33 (5) "Mandatory fees and tuition" means the costs that every student is required to pay in
34 order to enroll in classes, and does not include room and board, textbooks, program fees that may

1 exist in some majors, course fees that may exist for some specific courses, meal plans, or travel;

2 (6) "Multilingual adult" means an adult who has demonstrated advanced low or higher
3 proficiency in the target language of certification in accordance with the American Council on the
4 Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency scale through any of the approved Seal of
5 Biliteracy language proficiency assessments including, but not limited to: ACT, SAT, Advanced
6 Placement (English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, and World
7 Language), ACCESS, LAS Links (Form C/D), AAPPL, STAMP 4S, and ASLPI.

8 (7) "Multilingual learner" means a student who speaks a language other than English at
9 home.

10 (8) "Recipient student" means a college student attending Rhode Island College or the
11 University of Rhode Island enrolled in a certification program for world language or bilingual and
12 dual language and is awarded a scholarship pursuant to the provisions of § 16-117-4.

13 (9) "Recipient teacher" means an eligible teacher who is awarded a scholarship pursuant to
14 the provisions of § 16-117-6.

15 (10) "Scholarship" or "scholarship program" means the scholarship program that is
16 established pursuant to § 16-117-4 to promote and increase the quantity of bilingual, dual language
17 and world language teachers in urban core and urban ring public schools.

18 (11) "State" means the State of Rhode Island.

19 (12) "Urban core" means the municipalities of Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls,
20 Woonsocket and Newport.

21 (13) "Urban ring" means the municipalities of Cranston, Warwick, West Warwick, North
22 Providence and East Providence.

23 (14) "World language educator" means a person who is certified by the department of
24 elementary and secondary education as an All Grades World Language teacher in accordance with
25 the department of education regulation 200-RICR-20-20-1.

26 **16-117-3. Strategy to expand teaching certifications for bilingual dual language and**
27 **world language teachers.**

28 The department of education is hereby empowered and directed to collaborate with the
29 office of the postsecondary commissioner and in consultation with Rhode Island college (RIC) and
30 the university of Rhode Island (URI) to increase and streamline the issuance of world language or
31 bilingual and dual language certifications in order to increase the number of bilingual and dual
32 language and world language teachers in urban core and urban ring public schools.

33 **16-117-4. Scholarship program for college students.**

34 (a) Beginning November 1, 2025, there is hereby established a scholarship program within

1 the office of the postsecondary commissioner to promote and increase the number of bilingual, dual
2 language and world language teachers in urban core and urban ring public schools.

3 (b) The general assembly shall annually appropriate, commencing in fiscal year 2026, the
4 sum of five hundred thousand (\$500,000) to implement the scholarship purposes of this chapter.
5 Additional funds beyond the scholarships may be appropriated to support and advance the
6 scholarship program established pursuant to the provisions of this section. In order to support
7 administrative, recruitment, and implementation efforts, an amount not to exceed fifty thousand
8 dollars (\$50,000) shall be used as discretionary funds by the office of the postsecondary
9 commissioner. Any unexpended discretionary funds shall revert to their original purpose of
10 providing scholarships. In addition to appropriations by the general assembly, charitable donations
11 may be accepted into the scholarship program.

12 (c) The office of the postsecondary commissioner, in conjunction with the financial aid
13 office at RIC and URI, shall administer the scholarship program for state residents seeking
14 bilingual, dual language or world language teacher certification who meet the eligibility
15 requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

16 (d) To be eligible for receipt of the scholarship, a student:

17 (1) Shall be pursuing a bilingual dual language or world language teacher certification as
18 part of the teacher preparation program at RIC or URI;

19 (2) Shall commit to work full-time as a teacher within one year of certification completion
20 at an urban core or urban ring public school in Rhode Island. The commitment to work full-time
21 shall extend to one year of teaching for each year the recipient received and accepted an award of
22 scholarship pursuant to the provisions of this chapter;

23 (3) Shall qualify for in-state tuition and fees pursuant to the residency policy adopted by
24 the council on postsecondary education, as amended, supplemented, restated, or otherwise modified
25 from time to time ("residency policy");

26 (4) Shall complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA verification or the Rhode Island
27 alternative application for state postsecondary student financial assistance by the deadline
28 prescribed by RIC and URI for each year in which the student seeks to receive funding under the
29 scholarship program.

30 (5) Shall maintain an average annual cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or
31 greater, as determined by RIC and URI;

32 (6) Shall commit to a repayment of all funds received by the scholarship program if the
33 recipient student fails to complete or comply with all requirements and provisions of this chapter.

34 (e) The office of the postsecondary commissioner, in conjunction with RIC and URI, shall

1 develop a policy and procedure to secure the commitments referenced in § 16-117-4 from recipient
2 students.

3 (f) Every scholarship awarded pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be calculated
4 annually. Each applicant and/or recipient student shall complete the FAFSA and any required
5 FAFSA verification by the deadline prescribed by RIC and URI for each year of attendance. The
6 scholarship award shall cover the annual cost of mandatory fees and tuition, less federal and all
7 other financial aid monies available to the recipient student. Once awarded, the scholarship may
8 continue for a period of up to two (2) years conditioned on the recipient student's compliance with
9 the provisions of this section.

10 (g) All scholarships awarded pursuant to the provisions of this section are subject to
11 appropriation, and no applicant shall have a right to receive any scholarship pursuant to the
12 provisions of this section until awarded.

13 **16-117-5. Scholarship award preference for college students.**

14 In selecting recipient students of the scholarship established pursuant to § 16-117-4,
15 preference shall be given to the following applicants:

16 (1) Multilingual adults with a bachelor's degree from the United States or abroad; or

17 (2) Multilingual adults enrolled in an initial teacher certification program.

18 **16-117-6. Scholarship program for eligible teachers.**

19 (a) Beginning November 1, 2025, there is hereby established a scholarship program within
20 the office of the postsecondary commissioner to promote and increase the number of bilingual, dual
21 language and world language teachers in urban core and urban ring public schools.

22 (b) The general assembly shall annually appropriate, commencing in fiscal year 2026, the
23 sum of five hundred thousand (\$500,000) to implement the scholarship purposes of this chapter.
24 Additional funds beyond the scholarships may be appropriated to support and advance the
25 scholarship program established pursuant to the provisions of this section. In order to support
26 administrative, recruitment, and implementation efforts, an amount not to exceed fifty thousand
27 dollars (\$50,000) shall be used as discretionary funds by the office of the postsecondary
28 commissioner. Any unexpended discretionary funds shall revert to their original purpose of
29 providing scholarships. In addition to appropriation by the general assembly, charitable donations
30 may be accepted into the scholarship program.

31 (c) The office of the postsecondary commissioner, in conjunction with the financial aid
32 office at RIC and URI, shall administer the scholarship program for state residents seeking
33 bilingual, dual language or world language teacher certification who meet the eligibility
34 requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

1 (d) To be eligible for receipt of the scholarship, an eligible teacher:

2 (1) Shall be actively teaching full-time at a kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12)
3 public school located in the urban core or urban ring.

4 (2) Shall already be certified in early childhood, elementary, middle grades, secondary
5 grades, or all grades by the department of elementary and secondary education in accordance with
6 the department of education regulation 200-RICR-20-20-1.

7 (3) Shall complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA verification or the Rhode Island
8 alternative application for state postsecondary student financial assistance by the deadline
9 prescribed by RIC and URI for each year in which the student seeks to receive funding under the
10 scholarship program;

11 (3) Shall maintain an average annual cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or
12 greater, as determined by RIC and URI;

13 (4) Shall commit to a repayment of all funds received by the scholarship program if the
14 recipient teacher fails to complete or comply with all requirements and provisions of this chapter.

15 (e) The office of the postsecondary commissioner, in conjunction with RIC and URI, shall
16 develop a policy and procedure to secure the commitments referenced in § 16-117-6 from eligible
17 teachers.

18 **16-117-7. Promulgation of rules and procedure.**

19 The office of the postsecondary commissioner is authorized to promulgate rules and
20 regulations to effectuate the purpose of this chapter. In addition, RIC and URI shall establish appeal
21 procedures for the award, denial, repayment, or revocation of a scholarship award pursuant to the
22 provisions of §§ 16-117-4 and 16-117-6.

23 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on November 1, 2025.

=====
LC002351
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BILINGUAL, DUAL LANGUAGE AND WORLD
LANGUAGE TEACHERS INVESTMENT ACT

1 This act would authorize the office of the postsecondary commissioner to expand the
2 issuance of bilingual, dual language and world teacher certificates in urban core and urban ring
3 public schools by establishing two (2) scholarship programs, one for college students and one for
4 eligible teachers. The act would include detailed eligibility requirements and disbursement
5 requirements for Rhode Island college (RIC) and the university of Rhode Island (URI). In addition,
6 the act would permit charitable donations to the scholarship program as well as require an annual
7 appropriation of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) by the general assembly.

8 This act would take effect on November 1, 2025.

=====
LC002351
=====