

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION

Introduced By: Senators Quezada, Metts, Cano, Nesselbush, and Pearson

Date Introduced: March 21, 2019

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-22.2-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-22.2 entitled
2 "Biliteracy Seal" is hereby repealed.

3 ~~**16-22.2-1. Legislative intent.**~~

4 ~~(a) It is the intent of the legislature to encourage excellence for all pupils, and the~~
5 ~~legislature wishes to publicly recognize pupils for exemplary achievements in academic studies.~~

6 ~~(b) The study of languages other than English in elementary and secondary schools~~
7 ~~should be encouraged because it contributes to a pupil's cognitive development and to our~~
8 ~~national economy and security.~~

9 ~~(c) Proficiency in multiple languages is critical in enabling Rhode Island to participate~~
10 ~~effectively in a global political, social, and economic context, and in expanding trade with other~~
11 ~~countries.~~

12 ~~(d) The demand for employees to be fluent in more than one language is increasing both~~
13 ~~in Rhode Island and throughout the world.~~

14 ~~(e) The benefits to employers in having staff fluent in more than one language are clear~~
15 ~~and include access to an expanded market; allowing business owners to better serve their~~
16 ~~customers' needs; and the sparking of new marketing ideas that better target a particular audience~~
17 ~~and open a channel of communication with customers.~~

18 ~~(f) It is the intent of the legislature to promote linguistic proficiency and cultural literacy~~
19 ~~in one or more languages, in addition to English, and to provide recognition of the attainment of~~

~~those needed and important skills through the establishment of the state seal of biliteracy. A state seal of biliteracy would be affixed on the high school diplomas and transcripts of graduating pupils attaining proficiency in one or more languages, in addition to English.~~

SECTION 2. Section 16-22.2-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-22.2 entitled "Biliteracy Seal" is hereby amended to read as follows:

16-22.2-2. State seal of biliteracy.

(a) A state seal of biliteracy is established to recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages, in addition to English. The state seal of biliteracy shall be awarded by the commissioner beginning with the class of 2020. School district participation in this program shall be voluntary.

(b) The purposes of the state seal of biliteracy are as follows:

(1) To encourage pupils to study languages;

(2) To certify attainment of biliteracy;

(3) To provide employers with a method of identifying people with language and biliteracy skills;

(4) To provide universities with an additional method to recognize applicants seeking admission;

(5) To prepare pupils with twenty-first century skills;

(6) To recognize the value of foreign language and native language instruction in public schools. For the purpose of this section "foreign language" means any language other than English, including all modern languages, Latin, American sign language, native American languages, and native languages; and

(7) To strengthen intergroup relationships, affirm the value of diversity, and honor the multiple cultures and languages of a community.

(c) The state seal of biliteracy certifies attainment of a high level of proficiency by a graduating high school pupil in one or more languages, in addition to English.

(d) The council on elementary and secondary education shall promulgate such regulations of the commissioner as may be necessary to establish the criteria that students must achieve to earn a state seal of biliteracy, which may include, but shall not be limited to, attainment of units of credit in English language arts and languages other than English; passage of state assessments in English language arts and languages other than English; and passage of such additional assessments of foreign language proficiency as may be approved by the commissioner for this purpose.

1 (e) The commissioner shall do both of the following:

2 (1) Prepare and deliver, to participating school districts, an appropriate insignia to be
3 affixed to the diploma and transcript of the pupil indicating that the pupil has been awarded a
4 state seal of biliteracy by the commissioner.

5 (2) Provide other information they deem necessary for school districts to successfully
6 participate in the program.

7 (f) A school district that participates in the program under this section shall do both of the
8 following:

9 (1) Maintain appropriate records in order to identify pupils who have earned a state seal
10 of biliteracy.

11 (2) Affix the appropriate insignia to the diploma and transcript of each pupil who earns a
12 state seal of biliteracy.

13 (g) No fee shall be charged to a pupil pursuant to this section.

14 (h) The commissioner shall report to the general assembly not later than August 1, 2020
15 and each year thereafter a detailed report on the number of pupils who have earned and been
16 awarded a state seal of biliteracy and the language in which it was earned for that academic year
17 and previous five (5) years if applicable.

18 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION

1 This act would mandate that the state seal of biliteracy be awarded by the commissioner
2 beginning with the class of 2020. There would be a report to the general assembly by the
3 commissioner not later than August 1, 2020 and each year thereafter on the number of students
4 who have earned and been awarded a state seal of biliteracy.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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