

2024 -- S 2845

LC004134

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

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

Introduced By: Senators Cano, Pearson, Zurier, McKenney, DiPalma, Mack, and Lawson

Date Introduced: March 22, 2024

Referred To: Senate Education

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, 2022).

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

9 (4) 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 (5) 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 (6) 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 (7) 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 (8) Students learn important societal lessons through the example of cooperative interracial
3 and interethnic relationships among teachers.

4 (9) 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 (10) 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 114

16 BILINGUAL, DUAL LANGUAGE AND WORLD LANGUAGE TEACHERS INVESTMENT

17 ACT

18 **16-114-1. Short title.**

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

21 **16-114-2. Definitions.**

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

24 (1) "FAFSA" means the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form;

25 (2) "Mandatory fees and tuition" means the costs that every student is required to pay in
26 order to enroll in classes, and does not include room and board, textbooks, program fees that may
27 exist in some majors, course fees that may exist for some specific courses, meal plans, or travel;

28 (3) "Multilingual adult" means an adult who has demonstrated advanced proficiency in at
29 least two (2) languages.

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

33 (5) "World language educator" means a person who is certified by the Rhode Island
34 department of elementary and secondary education as an All Grades World Language teacher in

1 accordance with the Rhode Island Department of education regulation 200-RICR-20-20-1.

2 (6) "Multilingual learner" means a student who speaks a language other than English at
3 home;

4 (7) "Recipient student" means a student attending a public institution of higher education
5 in Rhode Island that offers certification programs for world language or bilingual, dual language
6 who qualifies and is awarded a scholarship pursuant to the provisions of § 16-114-4.

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

10 (9) "Recipient teacher" means an eligible teacher who is awarded a scholarship pursuant to
11 the provisions of § 16-114-6.

12 (10) "First generation" means a person whose parent or guardian did not receive a
13 bachelor's degree from the United States.

14 (11) "Scholarship program for students" means the scholarship program that is established
15 pursuant to § 16-114-4 to promote and increase the quantity of bilingual, dual language and world
16 language teachers in urban core and urban ring public schools.

17 (12) "Scholarship program for eligible teachers" means the scholarship program that is
18 established pursuant to § 16-114-6 to promote and increase the quantity of bilingual, dual language
19 and world language teachers in urban core and urban ring public schools.

20 (13) "State" means the State of Rhode Island.

21 (14) "Urban core" means the municipalities of Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls,
22 Woonsocket and Newport.

23 (15) "Urban ring" means the municipalities of Cranston, Warwick, West Warwick, North
24 Providence and East Providence.

25 **16-114-3. Strategy to expand teaching certifications for bilingual dual language and**
26 **world language teachers.**

27 The office of the postsecondary commissioner is hereby empowered and directed to
28 collaborate with the department of elementary and secondary education and in consultation with
29 public institutions of higher education that prepares teachers for world language or bilingual, dual
30 language certification to increase in and streamline the issuance of teaching certificates to promote
31 and increase the number of bilingual dual language and world language teachers in urban and urban
32 ring schools.

33 **16-114-4. Scholarship program for students.**

34 (a) Beginning September 1, 2024, there is hereby established a scholarship program within

1 the office of postsecondary commissioner to promote and increase the number of bilingual and 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 2025, the
4 sum of two million dollars (\$2,000,000) 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 addition to
7 appropriation by the general assembly, charitable donations may be accepted into the scholarship
8 program.

9 (c) The office of postsecondary commissioner, in conjunction with the financial aid office
10 or their respective equivalent offices, at a public institution of higher education, shall administer
11 the scholarship program for state residents seeking bilingual, dual language or world language
12 teacher certification who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

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

14 (1) Shall be pursuing a pre-kindergarten through grade twelve (Pre-K-12) teacher
15 certification as part of the teacher preparation program at a public institution of higher education;

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

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

23 (4) Shall complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA verification or the Rhode Island
24 alternative application for state postsecondary student financial assistance by the deadline
25 prescribed by a public institution of higher education for each year in which the student seeks to
26 receive funding under the scholarship program by deadline prescribed by a public institution of
27 higher education;

28 (5) Shall maintain an average annual cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or
29 greater, as determined by a public institution of higher education;

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

32 (e) The office of postsecondary commissioner, in conjunction with a public institution of
33 higher education, shall develop a policy and procedure to secure the commitments from recipient
34 students.

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

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

11 **16-114-5. Scholarship award preference for students.**

12 In selecting recipient students of the scholarship established pursuant to § 16-114-4,
13 preference shall be given to the following applicants:

14 (1) Multilingual adults with bachelor degrees from the United States or abroad; and

15 (2) Multilingual undergraduate students enrolled in teacher education programs.

16 **16-114-6. Scholarship program for eligible teachers.**

17 (a) Beginning September 1, 2024, there is hereby established a scholarship program within
18 the office of postsecondary commissioner to promote and increase the number of bilingual and dual
19 language and world language teachers in urban core and urban ring public schools.

20 (b) The general assembly shall annually appropriate, commencing in fiscal year 2025, the
21 sum of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to implement the scholarship purposes of this chapter.
22 Additional funds beyond the scholarships may be appropriated to support and advance the
23 scholarship program established pursuant to the provisions of this section. In addition to
24 appropriation by the general assembly, charitable donations may be accepted into the scholarship
25 program.

26 (c) The office of postsecondary commissioner, in conjunction with the financial aid office
27 or their respective equivalent offices, at a public institution of higher education, shall administer
28 the scholarship program for eligible teachers seeking bilingual, dual language or world language
29 teacher certification who meet the eligibility requirements in subsection (d) of this section.

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

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

33 (2) Shall already be certified in early childhood, elementary, middle grades, secondary
34 grades, or all grades by the Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary education.

1 (3) Shall complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA verification or the Rhode Island
2 alternative application for state postsecondary student financial assistance by the deadline
3 prescribed by a public institution of higher education for each year in which the student seeks to
4 receive funding under the scholarship program by deadline prescribed by a public institution of
5 higher education;

6 (4) Shall maintain an average annual cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or
7 greater, as determined by a public institution of higher education;

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

10 (e) The office of postsecondary commissioner, in conjunction with a public institution of
11 higher education, shall develop a policy and procedure to secure the commitments.

12 **16-114-7. Scholarship award preference for eligible teachers.**

13 In selecting recipient teachers of the scholarship established pursuant to § 16-114-4,
14 preference shall be given to eligible teachers who are multilingual and identify as first generation.

15 **16-114-8. Promulgation of rules and procedure.**

16 The office of postsecondary commissioner is authorized to promulgate rules and
17 regulations to effectuate the purpose of this chapter. In addition, a public institution of higher
18 education shall establish appeal procedures for the award, denial, repayment, or revocation of a
19 scholarship award pursuant to the provisions of § 16-114-4.

20 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on September 1, 2024.

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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 postsecondary commissioner to establish a program
2 to expand the issuance of teaching certificates to bilingual, dual language and world language
3 teachers in urban and urban ring schools; would establish two scholarship programs to promote and
4 increase the number of bilingual dual language and world language teachers in urban and urban
5 ring schools; and would establish the scholarship eligibility requirements and preferences.

6 This act would take effect on September 1, 2024.

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