

2026 -- S 2555 SUBSTITUTE A

LC004710/SUB A

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO BILINGUAL
EDUCATION ACT

Introduced By: Senators McKenney, Ciccone, Vargas, Tikoian, Britto, Gu, Murray, and
Acosta

Date Introduced: February 13, 2026

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by
2 adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 54.1

4 THE SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO BILINGUAL EDUCATION ACT

5 **16-54.1-1. Short title.**

6 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as "The Support and Access to Bilingual
7 Education Act."

8 **16-54.1-2. Definitions.**

9 For the purposes of this chapter:

10 (1) "Bilingual dual language teacher", or "BDL teacher," means a teacher who provides
11 integrated language and content instruction in a partner language only or in a partner language and
12 in English, appropriate to the instructional program model they teach in, and holds the appropriate
13 certification pursuant to regulation 200-RICR-20-20-1.

14 (2) "Bilingual language instruction program model" or "Bilingual education program
15 model" is an approach that serves multilingual learners at all stages of English language
16 development and who share a common home/native language. The goal of this approach is
17 proficiency and literacy in English and a partner language, as well as content achievement in both
18 English and a partner language. Instruction is provided in both English and home/native or partner

1 language. The bilingual education approach consists of dedicated English language development
2 and integrated language and content instruction components and can be structured in any of the
3 instructional program models as defined by 200-RICR-20-30-3.

4 (3) "Department" means the department of elementary and secondary education.

5 (4) "Eligible teacher" means a full-time teacher certified to teach in a kindergarten through
6 grade twelve (K-12) school by the department of elementary and secondary education and is
7 actively teaching within a public school with a high-incidence of multilingual learners in
8 accordance with regulation 200-RICR-20-30-3.

9 (5) "High incidence of multilingual learners" means a local educational agency with a
10 multilingual learners student population that meets at least one of the following two (2) criteria: (i)
11 Is greater than or equal to two hundred and fifty (250) total multilingual learners; or (ii) Is greater
12 than or equal to twenty percent (20%) of the local educational agency's total student population
13 pursuant to the Rhode Island regulations governing the education of multilingual learners (200-
14 RICR-20-30-3).

15 (6) "Local education agency" or "LEA" shall have the same meaning as defined in § 16-
16 92-3.

17 (7) "Multilingual individual" means an individual who has demonstrated advanced low or
18 higher proficiency in the target language of certification in accordance with the American Council
19 on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency scale through any of the approved
20 seal of biliteracy language proficiency assessments including, but not limited to: ACT, SAT,
21 advanced placement (English language and composition, English literature and composition, and
22 world language), ACCESS, LAS Links (Form C/D), AAPPL, STAMP 4S, and ASLPI.

23 (8) "Qualifying languages" means the most common languages other than English spoken
24 in the local education agency according to the U.S. Census Bureau and department data sources.

25 (9) "State" means the State of Rhode Island.

26 (10) "World language educator" means a person who is certified by the department of
27 elementary and secondary education as an all grades world language teacher in accordance with
28 regulation 200-RICR-20-20-1.

29 **16-54.1-3. Support and access to bilingual education act fund authorized.**

30 (a) The department shall establish and maintain a bilingual education support fund to
31 provide grants to traditional public school districts that establish and expand bilingual language
32 instruction program models; community-based organizations in collaboration with traditional
33 public school districts that establish and expand bilingual language instruction program models; or
34 institutions of higher education in partnership with traditional public school districts that establish

1 and expand bilingual language instruction program models.

2 (b) The fund shall consist of:

3 (1) Appropriations made by the general assembly pursuant to this section;

4 (2) Charitable contributions to the fund; and

5 (3) Other sources deemed appropriate by the department.

6 **16-54.1-4. Implementation of traditional public school district dual language**
7 **programs.**

8 (a) Eligibility for applicants shall be a minimum of one the following:

9 (1) A traditional public school district within the state;

10 (2) A community-based organization working in partnership with one or more traditional
11 public school district(s) within the state; or

12 (3) An institution of higher education (IHE) working in partnership with one or more
13 traditional public school district(s) within the state.

14 (b) An applicant may be eligible to receive a grant pursuant to the provisions of this chapter
15 if:

16 (1) The traditional public school district uses or is planning to create a high-quality
17 bilingual language instruction program model in accordance with chapter 54 of title 16 (“education
18 of limited English proficient students”) and in accordance with regulations promulgated pursuant
19 thereto.

20 (2) The LEA has a high incidence of multilingual learners as defined in 200-RICR-20-30-
21 3. For purposes of this section, the qualifying language(s) of instruction, in addition to English,
22 shall be determined based on the predominant home language(s) of the multilingual learner (MLL)
23 student population.

24 (3) The LEA develops and commits to an immediate or gradual staffing plan to support the
25 kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) dual language program.

26 (c) Traditional public school districts are encouraged to leverage existing funds including
27 the state share of the MLL funding formula distribution and federal funds.

28 (d) Traditional public school district, community-based organization, and institution of
29 higher education recipients funded pursuant to § 16-54.1-3, shall utilize such monies for dual
30 language program planning and implementation activities including, but not limited to:

31 (1) Partnering with education professionals and organizations to design programs;

32 (2) Developing and executing professional development for administrators and instructors;

33 or

34 (3) Traditional public school districts self-evaluation program planning and

1 implementation of staffing needs including, but not limited to:

2 (i) Providing financial support for bilingual dual language and world language teacher
3 certification;

4 (ii) Providing in-service educator dual language professional development;

5 (iii) Procuring high-quality curricular materials to enhance dual language instruction; and

6 (iv) Other activities designed to facilitate or promote the LEA's existing or emerging dual
7 language programs.

8 (e) Only programs that adhere to high quality dual language program standards shall be
9 funded.

10 **16-54.1-5. Strategy and support to expand teaching certifications for bilingual dual**
11 **language and world language teachers.**

12 (a) The department shall collaborate with the office of the postsecondary commissioner,
13 and in consultation with any approved educator preparation program, to increase and streamline
14 the issuance of world language and bilingual dual language certifications for purposes of increasing
15 the number of bilingual dual language and world language teachers in LEAs with a high incidence
16 of multilingual learners as defined in 200-RICR-20-30-3.

17 (b) Eligibility for applicants shall be at a minimum one of the following:

18 (1) A traditional public school district within the state;

19 (2) A community-based organization working in partnership with one or more traditional
20 public school district(s) within the state; or

21 (3) An institution of higher education (IHE) working in partnership with one or more
22 traditional public school district(s) within the state.

23 (c) An applicant may be eligible to receive a grant pursuant to the provisions of this chapter
24 if:

25 (1) Support for teacher certification costs are granted to multilingual individuals who plan
26 to teach in a traditional public school district and use, or is planning to create, a high-quality
27 bilingual language instruction program model in accordance with chapter 54 of title 16 ("education
28 of limited English proficient students") and further in accordance with regulations promulgated
29 pursuant thereto;

30 (2) The LEA has a high incidence of multilingual learners as defined in 200-RICR-20-30-
31 3; or

32 (3) The qualifying language(s) of instruction, in addition to English, shall be determined
33 based on the predominant home language(s) of the multilingual learner student population.

1 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

=====
LC004710/SUB A
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- THE SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO BILINGUAL
EDUCATION ACT

1 This act would require the department of elementary and secondary education to establish
2 a bilingual education support fund to provide grants to traditional public school districts that
3 establish and expand bilingual language instruction program model.

4 This act would take effect on July 1, 2026.

=====
LC004710/SUB A
=====