

2016 -- S 2735

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LC005309  
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BILITERACY SEAL

Introduced By: Senators Pichardo, Gallo, Satchell, Metts, and Crowley

Date Introduced: March 10, 2016

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

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

3 CHAPTER 22.2

4 BILITERACY SEAL

5 **16-22.2-1. Legislative intent. --** (a) It is the intent of the legislature to encourage  
6 excellence for all pupils, and the legislature wishes to publicly recognize pupils for exemplary  
7 achievements in academic studies.

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

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

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

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

1 (f) It is the intent of the legislature to promote linguistic proficiency and cultural literacy  
2 in one or more languages in addition to English and to provide recognition of the attainment of  
3 those needed and important skills through the establishment of the state seal of biliteracy. A state  
4 seal of biliteracy would be affixed on the high school diplomas and transcripts of graduating  
5 pupils attaining proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English.

6 **16-22.2-2. State seal of biliteracy. --** (a) A state seal of biliteracy is established to  
7 recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in listening,  
8 speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English. The state seal of  
9 biliteracy shall be awarded by the commissioner. School district participation in this program  
10 shall be voluntary.

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

12 (1) To encourage pupils to study languages;

13 (2) To certify attainment of biliteracy;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

34 (d) The commissioner shall do both of the following:

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

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

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

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

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

12          (f) No fee shall be charged to a pupil pursuant to this section.

13          SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BILITERACY SEAL

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1           This act would establish a state seal of biliteracy to recognize high school graduates who  
2 have attained a high level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one or  
3 more languages in addition to English.

4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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