

2024 -- S 2842

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- BILL OF RIGHTS FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS ACT

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

Date Introduced: March 22, 2024

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 by
2 adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 54.1

4 BILL OF RIGHTS FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS ACT

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

6 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Bill of Rights for Multilingual
7 Learners Act."

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

9 For the purposes of this chapter, the following words and terms shall have the following
10 meanings:

11 (1) "Bill of rights" means the bill of rights for multilingual learners drafted and approved
12 by the council pursuant to § 16-54.1-3.

13 (2) "Council" means the council on elementary and secondary education established
14 pursuant to § 16-60-1.

15 (3) "Multilingual learner" means a student learning English as an additional language.

16 **16-54.1-3. Multilingual learner student bill of rights.**

17 (a) The council shall draft and approve a written bill of rights for parents or guardians of
18 students who are multilingual learners to guarantee that the rights of the parents and students are
19 adequately safeguarded and protected in the scope of bilingual education. The bill of rights shall

1 include, but need not be limited to, the following declarations:

2 (1) The right of a multilingual learner student to attend a public school in the state
3 regardless of the student's immigration status or the immigration status of the student's parent or
4 guardian;

5 (2) The right of a parent or guardian of a multilingual learner student to enroll the student
6 in a public school without being required to submit immigration documentation, including, but not
7 limited to, a Social Security number, visa documentation or proof of citizenship;

8 (3) The right of a multilingual learner student to have translation services provided:

9 (i) By an interpreter who is present in person or available by telephone or through an online
10 technology platform, or

11 (ii) Through an Internet website or other electronic application approved by the council,
12 during critical interactions with teachers and administrators, including, but not limited to, parent-
13 teacher conferences, meetings with administrators of the school in which the student is attending,
14 and at properly noticed regular or special meetings of the school personnel or scheduled meetings
15 with a member or members of the school board responsible for educating the student;

16 (4) The right of a multilingual learner student to participate in a program of bilingual
17 education offered by the local school board when there are twenty (20) or more eligible students
18 classified as dominant in a language other than English;

19 (5) The right of a parent or guardian of a multilingual learner student to receive written
20 notice, in both English and the dominant language of the parent or guardian, that the student is
21 eligible to participate in a program of bilingual education or English as a new language program
22 offered by the local school board;

23 (6) The right of a multilingual learner student and the parent or guardian of the student to
24 receive a high-quality orientation session, in the dominant language of the student and parent or
25 guardian, from the local school personnel that provides information relating to state standards, tests
26 and expectations at the school for multilingual learner students, as well as the goals and
27 requirements for programs of bilingual education and English as a new language, prior to
28 participation in the program of bilingual education or English as a new language;

29 (7) The right of the parent or guardian of a multilingual learner student to receive
30 information about the progress of the student's English language development;

31 (8) The right of a multilingual learner student and the parent or guardian of the student to
32 meet with school personnel to discuss the student's English language development;

33 (9) The right of a multilingual learner student to be placed in a program of bilingual
34 education or English as a new language, if offered by the local school board;

1 (10) The right of a multilingual learner student to have equal access to all grade-level
2 school programming;

3 (11) The right of a multilingual learner student to have equal access to all core grade-level
4 subject matter;

5 (12) The right of a multilingual learner student to receive annual language proficiency
6 testing;

7 (13) The right of a multilingual learner student to receive support services aligned with any
8 intervention plan that the school or school district provides to all students;

9 (14) The right of a multilingual learner student to be continuously and annually enrolled in
10 a program of bilingual education or English as a new language while the student remains an eligible
11 student; and

12 (15) The right of a parent or guardian of a multilingual learner student to contact the local
13 school board with any questions or concerns regarding the student's right to receive multilingual
14 learner services or accommodations available to the student or parent or guardian, including
15 information regarding any recourse for failure of the school board to ensure the services or
16 accommodations are provided.

17 (16) All public elementary and secondary schools shall post the bill of rights in a place
18 conspicuous to students and the public.

19 **16-54.1-4. Written and online access to multilingual learner bill of rights.**

20 On or before September 1, 2024, and each school year thereafter, each local school board
21 providing a program of bilingual education or English as a new language shall:

22 (1) Provide the parents and guardians of eligible students with a copy of the multilingual
23 learner bill of rights in the dominant language of the parents and guardians; and

24 (2) Make such copies of the multilingual learner bill of rights available on the Internet
25 website of the school board.

26 **16-54.1-5. Translation services provided at meetings.**

27 Each school board shall, upon request of the parent or guardian of a multilingual learner
28 student or of the multilingual learner student, provide translation services to the parent or guardian
29 and/or student at a properly noticed regular or special meeting of the school board or at a scheduled
30 meeting with school personnel. The request for translation services shall be made at least one day
31 in advance of the meeting of the school board or with school personnel.

32 SECTION 2. 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 -- BILL OF RIGHTS FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS ACT

1 This act would require the council on elementary and secondary education to draft a written
2 bill of rights for parents or guardians of students who are multilingual learners that safeguard and
3 protect the rights of multilingual learners in public schools.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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