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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2015

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SENATE RESOLUTION

CREATING "THE OCEAN STATE WORLD LANGUAGE LEARNING COMMISSION" TO  
STUDY THE IMPACT OF THE STATE'S SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA ON LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS

Introduced By: Senators Pichardo, Jabour, Metts, Nesselbush, and DaPonte

Date Introduced: February 25, 2015

Referred To: Senate Education

1           WHEREAS, The Basic Education Program (BEP) is the overarching set of regulations  
2 for the Rhode Island public education system and it states that "Every public school student will  
3 have equal access to a high quality, rigorous, and equitable array of education opportunities from  
4 PK-12"; and

5           WHEREAS, The State of Rhode Island Commerce Corporation has as its mission "to  
6 work with public, private and nonprofit partners to create the conditions for businesses in all  
7 sectors to thrive and to improve the quality of life for our citizens by promoting the state's long-  
8 term economic health and prosperity"; and

9           WHEREAS, The State of Rhode Island can expand its competitive edge by positioning  
10 itself as an economic development engine in international settings by supporting, expanding and  
11 growing opportunities for world language learning; and

12           WHEREAS, It has been comprehensively documented that only having taken a foreign  
13 language as a high school requirement is no longer acceptable when graduates will need to  
14 compete in a global market. Government leaders and business leaders want individuals who can  
15 speak multiple languages for both national security and global market competition; and

16           WHEREAS, Rhode Island can capitalize on a resource that exists in its midst, one that  
17 can be nurtured and grown, to develop a citizenry that is capable of speaking multiple languages.  
18 A multi-lingual citizenry can help position Rhode Island as a national leader in language learning  
19 and position the state as an economic leader and compete in a global society as outlined in the

1 Rhode Island Roadmap to Language Excellence; and

2 WHEREAS, Rhode Island schools have a significant percentage of students who speak a  
3 language other than English in their homes. This capacity can be harnessed and further developed  
4 to ensure that while these students are learning English they are able to maintain and develop and  
5 share their native language; and

6 WHEREAS, Research has demonstrated that English Language Learners (ELL) can all  
7 learn the English language and acquire mastery of academic content at a rate that is superior to  
8 their peers in English-only programs when they have access to core subjects like math and  
9 reading in both English and in their native language; and

10 WHEREAS, Students from all backgrounds, including monolingual English speaking  
11 students, gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace with the acquisition of a second  
12 language; and

13 WHEREAS, Learning multiple languages should be part of a comprehensive viable and  
14 guaranteed curriculum beyond meeting only a minimum requirement as a prerequisite to  
15 graduation. Rhode Island can develop global citizens by supporting dual language programs and  
16 world language learning in its K-12 educational system and in its higher education institutions;  
17 and

18 WHEREAS, Rhode Island's funding formula and categorical funding mechanisms can  
19 serve as tools to help further promote these goals of becoming a global leader by investing in  
20 multi-lingual programs and a structure at the state level, to support these investments; and

21 WHEREAS, In June 2010, the State of Rhode Island signed into law legislation that  
22 created a school funding formula that according to the law's author, Brown University Professor  
23 Ken Wong included the following:

- 24 • A core instructional cost for each student;
- 25 • A "student success factor" to support students who come from low-income, high-needs  
26 backgrounds;
- 27 • State and local funding that follows the student;
- 28 • Determinants of state aid to districts based on local fiscal capacity and concentrated  
29 poverty;
- 30 • A gradual phase-in process; and
- 31 • A system that connects resource allocation with educational accountability; and

32 WHEREAS, The formula did not assign additional weights for English language learners,  
33 as to avoid what some called "the perverse incentive of over identification" and to ensure that  
34 district's promoted mainstreaming ELL students; and

1           WHEREAS, According to the Latino policy Institute at Roger Williams University  
2 "Rhode Island is facing a crisis in English Language Learner education. English Language  
3 Learners (ELLs) in Rhode Island – 75% of which are Latino – are among some of the lowest  
4 performing ELLs in the nation"; and

5           WHEREAS, The benefits that can be achieved by Rhode Island's citizenry, most of all its  
6 young populace, when the state makes investments to create dual language, multi-lingual,  
7 culturally responsive programs and opportunities in our K-12 and higher education institutions  
8 should be acknowledged; now, therefore be it

9           RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission, known as "The Ocean State World  
10 Languages Learning Commission," is hereby created consisting of nineteen (19) members;  
11 nineteen (19) of whom shall include, but not be limited to, representatives from urban, suburb,  
12 and rural parts of the state, early childhood education, elementary, middle, and high school  
13 district or public charter schools, higher education, teachers, students, parents, and professionals  
14 with knowledge and expertise in world language learning, to be appointed by the President of the  
15 Senate.

16           The purpose of said commission shall include, but not be limited to, studying the impact  
17 of the state school funding formula on English Language Learners, Dual Language Learners and  
18 multi-language learners, and to make recommendations on how to position Rhode Island as a  
19 national leader in language learning as outlined in the Rhode Island Roadmap to Language  
20 Excellence.

21           Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at  
22 the call of the President of the Senate and organize and shall select a chairperson.

23           Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

24           The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

25           All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,  
26 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or  
27 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

28           The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide  
29 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

30           RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the  
31 General Assembly no later than January 28, 2016, and said commission shall expire on March 25,  
32 2016.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
SENATE RESOLUTION  
CREATING "THE OCEAN STATE WORLD LANGUAGE LEARNING COMMISSION" TO  
STUDY THE IMPACT OF THE STATE'S SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA ON LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS

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1           This resolution would create a nineteen (19) member special legislative commission to be  
2 known as "The Ocean State World Language Learning Commission" whose purpose it would be  
3 to study the impact of the state's school funding formula on language learners, and who would  
4 report back to the General Assembly no later than January 28, 2016, and whose life shall expire  
5 on March 25, 2016.

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