

Submitter: Dana Hepper

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education

Measure: HB3198

The Children's Institute is in strong support of a strategic focus to support effective early literacy strategies for all children, starting at birth and continuing through 3rd grade. Children's brains develop rapidly in the first five years of life, and this is a critical window for children to develop rich vocabulary early literacy skills through talking, singing, and reading with their families and caregivers in home languages; foundational book skills; and social-emotional skills needed to engage effectively in their education. This essential work is CURRENTLY HAPPENING effectively through the state funded Early Childhood Equity Fund and Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation Fund. This legislation passed out of committee poised to build off of these successful programs by adding needed additional resources.

The -A7 backs away from these existing and effective approaches. Instead, it creates a new fund (without money) and unnecessary bureaucratic steps that simply delay increasing access to children and families to needed early literacy services.

We encourage the committee to allocate \$14 million to the Department of Early Learning and Care in order to increase investment in the Early Childhood Equity Fund and the Kindergarten Partnership & Innovation Fund. Thank you.