

Dear Rep. Kropf and Governor Kotek,

My name is Diana Sohn and I am a veteran teacher. I am a constituent from Salem, Oregon.

I'm writing because over 60% of Oregon 3rd graders aren't reading at grade level - even though research shows that 95% of kids **can** learn to read, given clear, structured instruction. I'm concerned that as currently written, [HB3198](#) and [HB3454](#) leave it up to individual districts to choose whether to apply for literacy funding that addresses our reading crisis. What happens to kids who live in districts that choose not to apply?

Reading is a Civil Right and all students deserve to be taught how to read. I have been an educator for over thirty years and am very concerned about the literacy rates of Oregon students. As an educator, I have seen firsthand the impact reading difficulties have on students and their families, including depression, poverty, homelessness, and incarceration. This is unacceptable and needs to change.

Over the past decade, I have spent time and money to improve my teaching so that I can teach all students to read. I did not receive this education through a university, but rather through extensive reading, podcasts, and training (LETRS, Orton-Gillingham, Oregon SB1003) about the science of reading. All students need foundational reading skills to become successful students.

Currently, I serve as a Reading Specialist/Instructional Coach in a small rural district where I am facilitating the implementation of a foundational reading curriculum and helping with the LETRS training. By using explicit direct instruction in the foundations of reading my students are gaining the skills to become proficient confident readers.

I am especially concerned that:

- The bills prioritize district choice over student needs. In 2022, our Secretary of State's office [warned](#) that the Oregon Department of Education's failure to intervene to help students and safeguard taxpayer investments is a larger problem than an infringement on local control.
- Oregon is ignoring best practices from other states where the states have taken direct responsibility for literacy and have seen impressive, sustained gains in reading.

Although [HB3198](#) and [HB3454](#) steps toward addressing our literacy crisis they should be amended to ensure our students get what they need. I'm asking you to consider the following changes:

- **Center students who struggle the most with reading.** Instead of a voluntary grant application process for districts, funds, and resources should be specifically and explicitly dedicated to schools with the highest numbers of struggling readers, administered and directed by the Oregon Department of Education.
- **Ensure the instruction and tools that children need to succeed are grounded in scientifically based research about reading.** An example of guard rails could be a Governor-appointed task force that vets specific assessments, curricula, teacher training, and other resources.

- **Prioritize tutoring and teacher training.** Intensive, high-dosage tutoring helps struggling readers immediately, while teacher training is a long-term investment in our educators as professionals that pays dividends for generations. Both should be prioritized in funding, vetted by the above task force, and coordinated by the Oregon Department of Education.

Teaching all students how to read is my goal and personal passion. There is no excuse for the low literacy rates in Oregon. As a proud Oregon citizen, I feel that Reading is a Civil Right that all students deserve to access to a well-trained educator who explicitly provides direct instruction. Confident proficient readers will become confident successful Oregon citizens

Sincerely,

Diana Sohn
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