

Submitter: Nicole Boyd
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB3198

Dear Committee Representatives and Governor Kotek,

My name is Nicole Boyd and I am the aunt of three children in Portland Public School District. I am a constituent from North Mt Tabor neighborhood of Portland. I am the primary homework helper in the family and have intricate experience with their day to day lives learning in Oregon public schools.

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?

My nephew was lucky to have excellent teachers that worked hard to help him achieve literacy yet it was with much struggle and effort by all of us working together at home and at school. What happens in other districts and areas where teachers don't have the capacity and will to give specific guidance and advice? Please make amendments that prioritizes students learning for ongoing success over notions of local control.

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 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.

HB3198 and HB3454 could be good first steps toward addressing our crisis, but should be amended in order 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.

Sincerely,
Nicole Boyd
Portland Oregon