

Submitter: Elena Barreto
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2007

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs McIntire and Dobson, and members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Elena Barreto, and I am the Senior Early Childhood Policy Advisor with the Children's Institute. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for HB 2007.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) plays a crucial role in early literacy, particularly during the transition to kindergarten and the early grades. SEL includes skills like self-regulation, self and social awareness, and relationship building, which are developmentally appropriate and foundational for young learners.

Early literacy development is a collaborative process, involving group activities and peer interactions. Strong social skills enhance language development, vocabulary, and comprehension. Children who can emotionally regulate and work well with others are more likely to engage in learning activities, persist through challenges, and perform better academically. Studies show that students with higher emotional intelligence enjoy reading and writing more and achieve better academic results. Additionally, longitudinal studies suggest that early academic achievement is built on a foundation of social-emotional skills. Therefore, all incoming kindergarteners should have access to these opportunities, not just those below grade level in reading. Family engagement is equally important. When families are involved, they model positive reading behaviors and engage in literacy activities at home, reinforcing school-taught skills. Providing funds for family engagement and learning in the early grades is essential. Studies indicate that when families are engaged and supported in goal-oriented, evidence-based programs focused on math and reading, young children show notable improvements in learning and school readiness.

Early learning programs operate in various settings, including community-based organizations, Head Start centers, and K-12 districts. By including early learning programs serving 4-year-olds as eligible to deliver kindergarten transition programs, we can ensure that children have access to these opportunities, especially in districts that do not prioritize kindergarten transition programming.

Integrating social-emotional learning into early literacy instruction, along with active family engagement, supports children's overall development, making them more resilient and motivated learners. This holistic approach not only enhances their literacy skills but also sets a strong foundation for their future academic success. We

urge the House Education Committee to amend HB 2007 with these recommendations.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Elena Barreto,
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