

Dear Rep. Kropf and Governor Kotek,

My name is Ann Vanderheiden and I am a teacher. I am a constituent from Clackamas County.

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?

As a teacher for 25 years, I have seen many changes in the field of education, on the teacher and student end. I currently teach 4th grade, and about half of my class is below grade level. I, on my own, got certified in Orton Gillingham and structured literacy. There are many things that are known, and have been known about learning to read, and much of what is sold as curriculum does not lend itself to teaching many of our students.

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.

It is so disappointing to see Oregon on so many negative lists when so many across the country are finally listening to what is known about reading and training teachers and providing support for students through their knowledge. My students deserve to learn.

[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,
Ann Vanderheiden
4th grade teacher
Spring Mountain Elementary
North Clackamas School District