



Thank you, Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and the Oregon House Education Committee for your consideration of HB3198.

My name is Madeleine Ashour and I write on behalf of ExcelinEd in Action, a national education policy organization implementing effective early literacy policy across multiple states for 15 years. Dr. Kymyona Burk, who is credited for leading Mississippi to a ten-point gain in literacy proficiency as measured by the NAEP, currently serves as our in-house early literacy policy expert.

From ExcelinEd's experience, we're concerned that the language as written will not take the Beaver State where it wants to go.

First, while grant programs are excellent tools for encouraging district experimentation in the on-going evolution of good teaching practice, they are not as effective when the goal is to standardize strong instruction practices across a state. The science of reading and the teaching practices that stem from it need no experimentation - the research on the efficacy of the science of reading is abundant, clear, and already fully actionable.

Further, grant programs can have inequitable results. Districts with additional capacity and resources make up most of the grantees in programs like these. Asking already-strapped schools, who are serving already-struggling students, to design a new instructional program, build it into a grant application, implement with fidelity, and keep up with the grant monitoring and reporting requirements, seems unfair and counterproductive.

I use words like design and experiment because HB3198's definition of the science of reading, and how it must be used in district plans, is susceptible to varying interpretations. The bill doesn't define a metric for "reading proficiency," and the language guiding districts on how to spend grant funds is at times unclear. There are no provisions directing districts to prioritize serving their lowest-performing students, and few that ensure prioritization of professional development in the science of reading. Beside Department vetting of applications, the only other point of oversight that HB3198 offers for this \$120 million investment occurs *after* a grantee district is determined by the Department to be "not progressing," years after those Oregon students have been needlessly underserved.

Oregon can honor its long-standing practice of local control, and effectively upgrade literacy instruction equitably across the state, by directing the Department or State Board to create a list of evidence-based assessments, curricula and professional development that applying districts can choose from, and build upon, to best meet local needs. States like Mississippi, Alabama, Colorado, Louisiana, Connecticut, and Tennessee have lists like these, and as a result, they are seeing statewide improvements in their literacy rates. As Dr. Burk says, "This is the most solvable issue of our time."

Literacy is a civil right. All Oregon kids deserve proven, effective literacy instruction, and they deserve it *now*. ExcelinEd in Action strongly urges the Committee to consider strengthening HB3198 by providing schools with the tools they need to effectuate rapid instructional improvement through lists of approved assessments, curricula, and professional development programs.

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