



OREGON KIDS READ

March 18, 2025

RE: HB 3040

Dear House Education Committee:

Thank you for your service to our state and your commitment to Oregon's students. I'm writing today with a major concern about HB 3040: that without adding accountability guardrails to the Early Literacy Success Initiative, continuing or increasing funding will not boost student outcomes. With some of the worst 4th grade reading scores in the country, Oregon must do better.

Given our finite resources, HB 3040 should be amended to ensure long-term systemic change and also offer an immediate remedy for students and schools that struggle the most with reading:

1) Require districts to use a portion of their literacy funds to train all K-3 teachers and administrators in the science of reading by Fall 2027

Research shows that almost 95 percent of children can learn to read, given the right instruction. Currently, districts can use their literacy initiative funds in a variety of areas and choose NOT to spend them on teacher training.

Other states that have increased literacy rates have invested in their educator workforce through professional development that includes a minimum number of training hours, rigorous evaluations of learning throughout the course, end-of-course assessment and documentation of successful completion of the course. Oregon teachers are hungry for this knowledge. Over 100 educators have signed an [open letter](#) calling for literacy funds to be used for training all K-3 educators and administrators.

2) Hold the state itself accountable by ensuring that any continued funding of the Early Literacy Success Initiative includes specific, supplemental support for Oregon's 42 Most Neglected Schools in reading

As I've mentioned in previous testimony on HB 2009, there are 42 schools across Oregon - rural and urban - whose 3rd-5th graders have scored in the lowest-proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA) since at least 2018.

All of these schools are Title I, with at least 40 percent of their students experiencing poverty. In the majority of these state-neglected schools, over 80 percent of their 3rd-5th graders are not at grade level in reading. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has been aware of these schools and their struggles with reading for years and yet failed to take action to support them. **You can click [here](#) to see whether one or more of these 42 state-neglected schools are in your district.**

Students in these 42 schools need and deserve immediate action. Dedicating funds towards high-dosage tutoring for them and training for their teachers should be part of any literacy initiative and the work could begin as early as next fall. Dedicated funding for these 42 state-neglected schools should supplement - not supplant - their districts' literacy initiative dollars.

3) Ensure that legislative intent is actually upheld in implementation of the Early Literacy Success Initiative

In 2023, legislators explicitly directed support to students who need it the most by including specific language in [HB 3198](#) Section 3, (4): *Rules shall, to the greatest extent practicable, prioritize schools with the lowest rates of proficiency in literacy.*

ODE instead decided to change the legislative directive, subverting “lowest rates of proficiency in literacy” by introducing [alternate characteristics](#) to decide which schools should be prioritized for literacy funding. To our knowledge, ODE is also not tracking literacy spending to the school level, making it impossible to determine the impact of these funds.

In order to absolutely ensure that legislative intent is followed and upheld, I urge the committee to remove prioritization from ODE rule-making in the Early Literacy Success Initiative and amend HB 3040 to **require** that Early Literacy Success School Grants "shall prioritize schools with the lowest rates of proficiency in literacy as determined by the state English Language Arts (ELA) assessment." The bill should also include a requirement that ODE track spending to the school level.

The above three changes to the bill will provide critical guardrails to ensure our limited dollars are achieving the outcomes our students desperately need. Thank you for sharing families' sense of urgency to address our literacy crisis immediately - not years from now. I welcome the chance to partner with you on making that a reality.

Sincerely,

Angela Uherbelau
Founder, [Oregon Kids Read](#)
Mom of two Oregon public school students