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RENEE ERICKSON
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TESTIMONY ON HB 2552
K-12 Education Budget Committee
February 13, 2020

Madam Chair and members of the K-12 Education Budget Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB 2552, regarding reading readiness of Kansas students. The purpose of the program is to provide options for students in the 3rd and 4th grade who do not read at grade level as determined by the Kansas State assessment.

Why do we need this legislation?

“The **research** is clear: if children cannot **read** proficiently by the end of **third grade**, they face daunting hurdles to success in school and beyond. **Third grade** marks a pivot point in **reading**. In fourth **grade**, students begin encountering a wider variety of texts.” *National School Boards Association*

According to researchers at Yale University, 75% of students who are poor readers in third grade will remain poor readers in high school.

Students with relatively low literacy achievement tend to have more behavioral and social problems in subsequent grades and higher rates of retention in grade. *Miles, S., and Stipek, D.*

Without a strong foundation in reading, children are left behind at the beginning of their education. They lag in every class, year after year because more than 85 percent of the curriculum is taught by reading. And by the end of third grade, 74 percent of struggling readers won't ever catch up. *The Children's Reading Foundation*

The National Research Council asserts that “academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone's reading skill at the end of third grade.” Students below grade level are 4 times more likely to drop out of high school. This effect is more pronounced for African American and Hispanic students.

Is this a problem for Kansas that needs to be addressed?

According to the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) Kansas Report Card:

Third Grade

2015 – 20.22% of all 3rd graders scored Level 1 on the Kansas State assessment. By 2019, this had increased to 28.58%.

For free lunch students over the same time period, 2015 = 32.26%; 2019 = 43.5% an increase of 11.24%.

Fourth Grade

2015 – 44.74% of all 4th graders scored Level 1 or Level 2 on the Kansas State assessment. By 2019, this had increased to 52.33%.

For free lunch students over the same period, 2015 = 62.42%; 2019 = 70.87%.

KSDE: **Level 1** indicates that a student shows a limited ability to understand and use the English Language arts skills and knowledge needed for Postsecondary Readiness.

KSDE: **Level 2** indicates that a student shows a basic ability to understand and use the English Language arts skills and knowledge needed for Postsecondary Readiness.

The alarm is being sounded across the country, not just here in Kansas. To date, 18 states require the retention of students not reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade (4th grade in Missouri). Nine states plus DC allow but do not require retention on the same basis. There are a variety of other programs across the country due to the critical need and urgency to help students succeed.

“The fact is that the low-income students who are not at the appropriate proficient level in reading today are all too likely to become our nation’s lowest-income, least-skilled, least-productive, and most costly citizens tomorrow. Simply put, without a dramatic reversal of the status quo, we are cementing educational failure and poverty into the next generation.” Kids Count Report, Annie E Casey Foundation.

Continuing to go down the same path should not be an option when we know what’s at stake for the success and well-being of students and families.

“Either you defend the status quo, or you invent the future.” Seth Godin