Testimony in support of H.B. No. 6620 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RIGHT TO READ AND ADDRESSING OPPORTUNITY GAPS AND EQUITY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Submitted by Darci Burns, Ph.D. HILL for Literacy,
Inc.

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Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Darci Burns. I am the executive director of HILL for Literacy. HILL for Literacy is a non-profit organization that partners with state departments and school districts to implement multi-tiered systems of supports aimed at improving reading outcomes. In response to federal mandates (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2004; No Child Left Behind, 2001), Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) frameworks such as response-to-intervention (RTI) and positive behavior supports (PBIS) were established to support the high demands on classroom teachers. However, districts and schools tend to underestimate the extensive work and planning it takes to implement a comprehensive MTSS model that meets the needs of all students. The fact is, many schools have implemented MTSS but lack the systems and maintenance structures to enable an effective, sustainable effort.

 I write to strongly support the Right to Read Act.

Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) have been encouraged nationally as a framework for organizing and delivering academic, social, emotional, and behavioral resources, personnel, practices, and systems. MTSS is most commonly and generally described as a prevention-based framework for enhancing the development and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based practices to achieve academically and behaviorally important outcomes for all students (www.pbis.org, McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

The current Connecticut K-3 Literacy Initiative, is an example of how to effectively establish sustainable MTSS model of instruction in the highest need districts. The funding and support for the CT K-3 Literacy initiative has enabled schools to focus their literacy efforts on providing effective literacy instruction driven by assessment data to ensure that all students learn to read and write on grade level. The evaluation of the CK3LI initiative in the initial pilot schools demonstrated that our tiered instructional, assessment and leadership model (MTSS) leads to improved student outcomes. Furthermore, the funding has supported literacy training, consultation and coaching support to over 70 schools across Connecticut.

The proposed bill, will enable the current thought partners in collaboration with various state agencies to create a sustainable literacy center anchored in current research. The Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success will serve as permanent technical assistance and training center to reach all school districts across the state. Through the literacy research center, the adequate support will be provided to SDE to increase the capacity to extend the training and coaching to more schools and impact the reading achievement of more students.

Respectively submitted:

Darci A. Burns