

March 17, 2021

To the Members of the Education Committee,

I am a parent, educator and education researcher living in Old Saybrook, and I work with schools across the state supporting reading specialists in my role as an associate professor of literacy education at UConn. I am writing to urge you **NOT to support SB6620**, *An Act Concerning the Right to Read*. Provisions in this bill would limit opportunities for educators and local school boards to make decisions about literacy curriculum, assessment, intervention, coaching and leadership.

This approach will damage districts with few resources by undermining their infrastructure for improvement, and would stunt and degrade high-performing districts. It would also limit each district's ability to be responsive to and reflective of their communities in ways that sustain cultural relevance and community engagement. Research has demonstrated that **high-quality curricular resources can scaffold better teaching, but can also shackle it**, limiting its scope and curtailing its potential to reach all students.¹ We must invest in local capacity-building, not arbitrary constraints, if we want to educate all learners in Connecticut.

Scientific reading instruction requires a scientific approach to scaling up approaches with a track record of success. The CK3LI served as an important pilot project and generated knowledge both from its successes and its documented difficulties. As Dr. Michael Coyne and colleagues explained in their 2018 article in *Exceptional Children* exploring the impact of Tier 2 interventions used in the CK3LI pilot project: “results indicated statistically significant overall effects on measures of phonemic awareness and word decoding and **no discernable effects on reading fluency and comprehension.**”² (emphasis added). The quest for evidence supporting an approach that would serve students with reading difficulties across the state of Connecticut is not complete despite CK3LI's undeniable contribution. We must remain open to diverse possibilities in order to meet the needs of diverse learners.

An evidence-based policy would tentatively expand *and refine* current approaches, building on the varied and unique strengths and resources of each community. This requires an equal investment in each community, not broad mandates from a small, centralized group with no accountability or oversight. There is too much at stake, and children have too much to lose if the rich diversity of our communities is not fully represented in decisions regarding teaching and learning.

Thank you for your consideration,



Dr. Rachael Gabriel

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¹ Valencia. (n.d.). Curriculum Materials for Elementary Reading: Shackles and Scaffolds for Four Beginning Teachers. *International Journal of Educational Development.*, 107(1), 93–120. <https://doi.org/info:doi/>

² Coyne MD, Oldham A, Dougherty SM, et al. Evaluating the Effects of Supplemental Reading Intervention Within an MTSS or RTI Reading Reform Initiative Using a Regression Discontinuity Design. *Exceptional Children.* 2018;84(4):350-367. doi:10.1177/0014402918772791

