

Co-Chairs McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, Vice-Chairs Daugherty Abrams and Barry, and members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to you today, as interim President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system in support of H.B. No. 6620: 'An Act Concerning The Right To Read And Addressing Opportunity Gaps and Equity in Public Schools.'

As a lifelong educator, I know that literacy is a critical predictor of educational and lifelong success. It is of the utmost importance that the many Connecticut residents who enroll at our colleges and universities have a strong reading ability. All students at every educational level must read to learn in order to advance their education and gain the skills they will need to thrive in the workforce and attain jobs with family-sustaining wages.

Yet all too often, students at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels do not possess the reading skills necessary to succeed educationally. This literacy crisis affects every city and town in Connecticut, but in particular we see wide gaps when comparing the literacy abilities of Black and Latinx students with those of White students. The COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated these conditions. Truly, we are at a critical juncture in the future of our state and its citizens.

We know the precise problem. When students do not learn to read, it is almost always because they are not being taught correctly. We also know the precise solution – the research has spoken on this, and it has spoken for decades: students learn to read when teachers use evidence-based, structured instruction and interventions. Quite simply, students learn to read when instruction is based in the science of reading.

H.B. No. 6620 creates accountability for ensuring that the science of reading is at the core of both student instruction and teacher training. It also provides necessary state and federal supports for the delivery of instruction and training. We are all educators with the same goal: ensuring that equitable education is afforded to each individual student. This bill enhances our ability to do just that by adopting a proven, statewide, comprehensive, science-based approach to literacy instruction.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for H.B. No. 6620 and thank you for your work as a committee on behalf of the students of Connecticut.

Jane McBride Gates, Ph.D.

CSCU Interim President and Provost of Academic and Student Affairs