

**Testimony in Support of
H.B. 6620, An Act Concerning the Right to Read and Addressing Opportunity Gaps
and Equity in Public Schools**

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Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. 6620, which would help improve student literacy and ensure every Connecticut student has equitable access to reading opportunities. I also want to specifically thank Sen. Miller and Representatives Rojas and McGee for their work on this issue.

A student's ability to read is a critical predictor of educational and lifelong success, and improving student literacy is essential to addressing our state's opportunity gap and eliminating racial disparities in education. By the 3rd grade, students must transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Without those skills, the rest of the K-12 curriculum will not be fully accessible to them, and they can fall increasingly behind.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly half of Connecticut's public school students were not meeting grade-level expectations in reading by third grade, and wide gaps existed in reading attainment by race. The pandemic has only exacerbated this problem by disrupting education and causing significant learning loss.

H.B. 6620 would help address our state's student literacy challenges by using the latest cognitive and educational research about how students build literacy skills to provide effective and equitable reading instruction in every classroom and close the literacy opportunity gap.

By systematizing the use of research-based literacy instruction in every school; expanding the Connecticut Literacy Model for reading instruction; and establishing a Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success, H.B. 6620 represents a comprehensive approach to better preparing educators and improving the literacy skills of students.

This is why I urge the Committee to support H.B. 6620 and help ensure every Connecticut student has equitable access to reading opportunities and the literacy skills to succeed in and outside of the classroom.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 6620, and please feel free to reach out to me via the contact information below should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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About the School and State Finance Project

Founded in 2015, the School and State Finance Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit policy organization, focused on education funding and state finance issues, with a commitment to providing independent analysis, building public knowledge, improving transparency, and developing fair, sustainable solutions.

The organization strives to serve as a trusted, independent source of accurate data, information, and research, and is focused on:

- Increasing awareness and building public knowledge about Connecticut's education finance system, state budget, and overall fiscal health;
- Improving transparency around Connecticut's education and state finances;
- Working collaboratively to develop thoughtful, data-driven solutions that address Connecticut's education funding and state finance challenges; and
- Providing technical assistance to partner organizations seeking to solve education finance-related challenges.

For more information about the School and State Finance Project, visit www.schoolstatefinance.org.