

March 16, 2021

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

It is my privilege to reach out to you on behalf of the [University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education](#) with this letter of unequivocal support for [H.B. No. 6620, An Act Concerning the Right to Read and Addressing Opportunity Gaps and Equity in Public Schools](#).

I am a professor of curriculum and instruction as well as interim dean of UConn's Neag School, one of the leading graduate school of education in the nation. I am also a Latinx, first-generation college graduate who would not be here, writing to you today, without my education.

Being able to read and to think critically are skills that many take for granted. Having dedicated my career to multicultural education, urban teacher recruitment, and youth in urban schools, I have seen firsthand how missing out on literacy can obscure student potential and, ultimately, diminish the prospects of even the most promising young people.

By grade 3, nearly half of our state's public school students are failing to meet reading expectations for their grade level — not to mention the wide gaps that persist in reading attainment among students of color. Sadly, these trends have only suffered further amid the pandemic. Connecticut's future resides in the hands and minds of these schoolchildren. Advancing their education will be a win for us all — contributing to a thriving workforce and economy, an informed citizenry, and a more equitable society.

To make progress in the realm of education, we must rely on evidence. As a research scholar, I urge you to consider the science of reading. Research studies have directly translated into practices that are benefiting our schoolchildren. For one, our own Dr. Michael Coyne, a nationally renowned literacy expert here at the Neag School, has been instrumental in advancing literacy across the state in recent years. His breakthrough research on children's reading skills led several years ago to a pilot reading initiative known as CK3LI — funded in part by the Connecticut General Assembly — that has since demonstrated [dramatic improvement](#) in early childhood literacy. Adopted by [dozens of schools](#) statewide, it [stands today as a critical model](#) in continuing to address Connecticut's reading achievement gap. This model for teaching reading, developed right here in Connecticut, is primed to be scaled at public schools statewide, with your support.

On behalf of UConn's Neag School — but also in the interest of the next generation, who will in turn shape our state's future — I respectfully urge you vote in favor of H.B. No. 6620. Your support for this bill can help ensure that research-proven literacy strategies will continue to be put into practice in our schools; that Connecticut's teachers are equipped with the scientific

knowledge they need to guide students at all levels toward success; and that our state will go on to foster a promising future.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Irizarry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Jason Irizarry, Ed.D.
Interim Dean and Professor
Neag School of Education
University of Connecticut