



WATERBURY PUBLIC
SCHOOLS
ACADEMIC OFFICE

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 Dena Mortensen, Waterbury Public
Schools

March 16, 2021

Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Dena Mortensen. I am the Supervisor of Elementary Reading and Language Arts for Waterbury Public Schools. The Right to Read Act has provided us with partners who have helped us 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. We have 20 elementary schools in Waterbury and about 420 classroom teachers. Ensuring that everyone understands the systems in place, knows how to interpret the data, and, most importantly, knows how to respond based on the data is a very complicated job. The work is extensive. Our partners from CK3LI - Hill for Literacy, UConn, and Literacy How- have helped build our understanding of key content and best practices. They have helped us shape our systems and support our teachers through top notch professional development around the science of reading.

I write to strongly support the Right to Read Act.

The funding and support for the CT K-3 Literacy initiative has enabled us to focus our efforts on providing effective literacy instruction driven by assessment data to ensure that all students learn to read and write on grade level. The funding has supported literacy training, consultation and coaching support to all our elementary schools. The supports provided have helped increase student reading achievement in Waterbury. Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) has increased on average from 47% proficient to 51% proficient in grades 1-5 collectively as measured by DIBELS Next ORF.

Increasing student reading achievement in a large urban district is a heavy lift. Thanks to the support from initiatives such CK3LI, we have been able to transform our systems and our practice. Losing this support would have a profound impact on our teaching and learning. We are “all in” here in Waterbury, and we simply could not do the work without these critical supports.

Respectively submitted:

Dena Mortensen