

Good afternoon Sen. McCrory, Sen. Berthel, Rep. Currey, Rep. McCarty, and Members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding S.B. No. 1094 An Act Concerning the Implementation of Reading Models or Programs which will delay implementation of the requirements of the Right to Read legislation.

My name is Kim Healy and I am a Selectwoman and resident of Wilton. I am also House Minority Leader Vin Candelora's appointee to the Reading Leadership Implementation Council. I am not here today to represent the Council or the town of Wilton. I am here to testify on behalf of the thousands of children in our state who cannot read and will never learn to do so if we do not take the necessary time to make sure we make recommendations and curriculum that will actually ensure our kids are taught properly to read.

I accepted the request to serve as a volunteer on the Reading Leadership Implementation Council because I believe deeply that every child deserves and needs to be able to read well. My family has a long history of volunteering in underserved schools as reading assistants. When my own children were born, I read books on how to encourage them be lovers of reading. I have served on many library boards and know how crucial they are in enabling people of all ages access to books and other reading materials. I personally love to read.

During my time as a member of the Implementation Council, I have heard from educators, advocates and parents from around the state. I have become very familiar with how the State Education Department runs. I am informed of the merits of the Science of Reading and understand that the reliance on commercial reading programs to satisfy state education requirements are not going to be the answer to the reading problems of our students.

I respectfully ask that you delay the implementation of the Right to Read legislation and give the council more time to get the waiver process right and that we be permitted to create small working groups to develop curriculum and programs. School districts can choose to adopt our curriculum or use it to guide their own writing of curriculum tailored to their students' needs. The Council should also be tasked with ensuring that all district leadership and educators be trained in the Science of Reading so they ensure it is being included in all areas requiring reading in their school district.

We appreciate that the legislature has allocated over \$35 million to this initiative already. I believe the funds should be mostly spent providing Master classes, supports and other assistance to our school districts instead of funding commercial programs or pursuing a wavier process that seems inclined to burden every municipality even further.

I believe that CT is at a crossroads. The education disruption due to the pandemic and the damage it has caused to most of the students in our state has only exacerbated the reading problem we have. I applaud the legislature for passing the Right to Read bill but implore you spend the time and make amendments necessary to ensure it will be successful.

