



Stacey Tie Testimony to
Education Committee on behalf of SEEK CT
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My name is Stacey Tie. I am a special education advocate, the secretary and advocacy committee member of Special Education Equity for Kids (SEEK). I am submitting this testimony on behalf of SEEK. Thank you for your commitment to literacy here in CT.

Research consistently shows that failing to read proficiently by the end of third grade is one of the strongest predictors of long-term academic and life outcomes. A widely cited longitudinal study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that students who are not proficient readers by third grade are about four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers. Students who experience both poverty and low reading proficiency face even greater risk. Literacy outcomes are also closely tied to juvenile justice and incarceration statistics. National justice and education research has found that roughly 70–85 percent of youth involved in the juvenile justice system struggle with reading or are functionally illiterate, and adult correctional data similarly show that a majority of incarcerated adults read below a middle school level. These findings demonstrate that early literacy is not just an academic issue but a long-term societal outcome indicator.

While the bill aims to support struggling readers, it relies heavily on standardized mastery exam scores or growth targets to trigger intervention eligibility, which is a significant concern. These measures are not designed to diagnose reading deficits and cannot identify the underlying skill gaps that struggling readers actually have, such as weaknesses in phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, or language processing. Standardized assessments are broad accountability tools, not diagnostic literacy screeners, and they frequently fail to detect students who compensate well enough to score above cut levels despite serious foundational deficits. They are also less reliable indicators for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students affected by testing conditions or anxiety. Relying on these metrics risks both under-identification and misidentification: students with real reading difficulties may be excluded from intervention, while others may be flagged based on temporary score fluctuations rather than true instructional need. For intervention policy to be effective, eligibility must be driven by diagnostic literacy assessments that directly measure reading subskills, not solely by statewide test performance or growth formulas.

Funding is another major issue. The bill mandates individualized plans, literacy teams, and tutoring supports but does not guarantee funding. The tutoring component relies on a competitive grant program rather than stable statewide funding. Competitive grants often disadvantage districts with fewer administrative resources, which can worsen inequities between communities.

The tutoring requirements themselves need strengthening. The bill requires tutors to be trained, but it does not specify that they must be authentically trained in structured literacy. Many current literacy specialists and reading instructors were trained under outdated instructional models and have not received rigorous preparation aligned with structured literacy principles.

Despite current regulations such as 10-145d that require this training. In practice when myself and my fellow advocates and attorneys remind districts of this regulation and requirement districts dismiss it and ignore it and flat out refuse to follow it. We have made CSDE aware of this many times with no enforcement and accountability. Without clear training standards, districts could technically comply while still providing ineffective instruction.

In addition, the law allows tutoring outside the school day but does not address transportation. After-school or summer services place a logistical burden on families, particularly working parents or those without reliable transportation. Districts should be required to provide transportation if services occur outside regular school hours to ensure equitable access.

Section 2 requires tutoring to be evidence based and aligned with the core curriculum. However, “evidence based” is not defined as grounded in peer-reviewed scientific research, which is the standard used in rigorous literacy policy. Alignment with a district’s core curriculum is also problematic because the bill does not require that curriculum itself to be aligned with the science of reading. While K–3 curricula may be science aligned under other policies, many districts revert to less effective approaches in grades 4 and above. Again I appalled this body for passing Right to Read, however we are finding many districts who did not get the waiver are still not following this law and there is no oversight or enforcement from CSDE. Aligning tutoring to those materials risks reinforcing ineffective instruction rather than remediating reading deficits.

The dosage requirement for tutoring is another weakness. The bill defines high-dosage tutoring as three weekly sessions of at least 30 minutes. For students with significant reading deficits, this is unlikely to be sufficient.

Structured literacy intervention typically requires 45–60 minute sessions to deliver explicit, systematic instruction across phonology, decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Shorter sessions may not provide enough intensity to produce measurable progress.

Implementation logistics also present challenges. Schools must assemble literacy teams including teachers, specialists, and administrators, yet many districts already face shortages of reading specialists. Without dedicated funding for staffing, schools may struggle to meet these requirements with fidelity.

The bill also proposes a statewide data center to track assessment use and student data. Although it states information must be nonidentifiable, parents may still have concerns about data storage, sharing practices, and third-party involvement.



Parent involvement language is another gap. Plans must describe how parents will be informed, including regular progress monitoring data and supported, but no minimum standards are set for frequency, format, accessibility, or language translation. This could result in inconsistent communication across districts.

We need our Teachers to be trained in structured literacy because it is grounded in the science of reading—decades of research on how the brain learns to read. Structured literacy emphasizes explicit, systematic

instruction in phonology, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, ensuring that all students—especially those with dyslexia or other reading difficulties—receive the support they need to become proficient readers.

Unlike less systematic approaches, structured literacy equips teachers with a deep understanding of language structure and evidence-based practices that help prevent reading failure before it starts. By training teachers in these methods, schools can close literacy gaps, special education eligibility numbers decrease, promote educational equity, and empower every child with the foundational skill that underpins all learning: the ability to read confidently and critically.

In closing, the goal of supporting struggling readers is essential and urgent. However, for this legislation to truly change outcomes, it must ensure early intervention, guaranteed funding, strong tutor training standards, adequate instructional time, transportation access, enforcement of this and current regulations, and alignment with peer-reviewed reading science. Without these safeguards, the bill risks identifying struggling readers without providing the level of instruction needed to change their trajectory.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to improving literacy outcomes for all students.

