



October 30, 2020

The Honorable Toni Atkins
 Senate President pro Tempore
 State Capitol, Room 205
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
 Speaker, State Assembly
 State Capitol, Room 219
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Statement on behalf of Senate Bill 614 Supporters

Dear Pro Tem Atkins and Speaker Rendon:

As supporters of authentic, standard-aligned assessments to ensure elementary and special education teachers can teach reading to all students, we're collectively disappointed that Senate Bill 614 did not make it to the Governor's desk this year. The measure, authored by veteran teacher Senator Susan Rubio, would have replaced the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA)—a standardized test that is not correlated with effective reading instruction—and instead embedded the assessment of a teacher's ability to effectively teach reading into the performance-based Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA). The TPA is proven to predict a teacher's efficacy in reading instruction and would have required that every new teacher *demonstrate* they can teach foundational reading with real students, instead of just passing the RICA multiple choice test.

California students deserve educators that can employ the knowledge, skills and abilities to identify struggling readers and provide tailored support. Since the RICA was last updated in 2009, California has adopted new English Language Arts/English Language Development (ELA/ELD) frameworks and standards to better serve English learners, students with dyslexia and students with disabilities.

In the more than 20 years it has been administered, RICA has not proven to be an effective predictor of quality reading instruction nor has it moved the needle for students, according to California's NAEP scores. What's more, the exam has disparate pass rates and excludes prospective bilingual teachers and candidates of color from the profession when we know the importance of representation via a diverse teacher workforce for all students, especially students of color. The TPA does not have these disparate pass rates. SB 614 would have fully aligned teacher preparation programs and the TPA to California's robust ELA/ELD Framework and Standards, ensuring that elementary and special education teachers have all the tools to identify and support struggling readers.

We seek your support to champion and advance fully aligning teacher credentialing standards and examinations to our curriculum frameworks and to encourage best practices of authentic performance assessments. Now, more than ever, there is an urgency to adopt these changes so that our teacher workforce is diverse, and to accelerate learning in the face of the pandemic and mitigate learning loss. Our students deserve teachers who are prepared through assessment of instructional practice, instead of only those who were able to pass an outdated, standardized test. These efforts are made more urgent with the COVID-19 pandemic and this moment of racial reckoning, which exacerbate our teacher shortage and shine a light on the need for reading instruction that puts our large multilingual population and students of color at the center. Further, the state has a public interest and sustained commitment to recruit and retain a diverse and well-prepared teacher workforce to meet the educational needs of our over 6 million diverse students. Since 2016, the state has invested \$194.2 million on teaching recruitment efforts, yet even with these increases in funding, the RICA remains a gatekeeper for the very teacher candidates we want in our classrooms.

We look forward to working with the legislature to secure passage of this important piece of legislation next year. We are committed to improving reading instruction for all of our students and believe that replacing RICA with a more robust performance assessment will help us achieve this goal. There are various opinions when it comes to reading instruction assessment, but we are confident we share a common north star: a teacher workforce that is properly trained and has demonstrated the ability to teach all California students how to read.

For more information contact Nathaly Teran, Legislative Aide: nathaly.teran@sen.ca.gov 916-651-4022

cc: The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California
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Senator Anthony J. Portantino, Chair, Senate Appropriations
Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez, Chair, Assembly Appropriations
Senator Susan Rubio, California State Legislature
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