

# Michigan's Struggling Readers Don't Need Another Opportunity To Fail!

***"There is an epidemic of reading failure that we have the scientific evidence to treat effectively and we are not acknowledging it or implementing it."***

- Dr. Sally Shaywitz, Co-Director Of The Yale Center For Dyslexia & Creativity, testifying before the [Congressional Committee for Science & Technology hearing on dyslexia](#) on September 18, 2014

Dear

As parents and professionals who support Michigan's struggling readers every day in classrooms, in tutoring centers, and in our homes, we share the legislature's concern about low literacy in our state. We also understand firsthand the strategies that help these students to thrive.

Unfortunately, HB 4822, which recently passed out of the Michigan House Education Committee, if enacted, will offer more hardships than supports to the very struggling readers targeted by this bill ...

- ❑ **HB 4822 does not address the devastating action gap** that exists between what science shows about how to help all struggling readers, including the approximately 80% of Michigan's struggling readers impacted by some form of dyslexia, and what is currently implemented in our schools.
  - As written, schools can continue to implement programs like Reading Recovery and Leveled Literacy that meet the generic criteria in the bill, but are ineffective for struggling readers with dyslexia.
  - Furthermore, teachers, literacy coaches and other support staff are not required to receive specific training to recognize, support and remediate dyslexia, which is the most common cause of reading failure.
- ❑ **Retention is unnecessary for literacy improvement.** A combination of early identification, proven interventions, accommodations and assistive technology allow students with dyslexia and other reading struggles to stay on grade-level with their peers while participating in remediation, which takes about 1.5 - 3 years depending on the severity of their challenges.
- ❑ **The "Good Cause" exemption for special education students:**
  - Will not apply to the 2/3 of students with dyslexia that are **unidentified**
  - Will not apply to the 9 out of 10 students with dyslexia who **do not** qualify for an IEP under Michigan criteria
  - Will not require the instructional improvements in special education that our most severely affected struggling readers -- those who *do* have an IEP -- need to be successful.
- ❑ **Punishing students for failing to learn the way we teach will not improve Michigan literacy. When dyslexia, which affects up to 1-in-5 students, is identified and addressed with proven approaches long before 3rd Grade, these students' academic potential remains intact. Retention and social promotion and their consequences, for individuals and their communities, are entirely avoidable. Don't punish children for a failure to implement proven interventions and supports in our schools.**

**Michigan cannot meet its literacy goals without addressing the dyslexia action gap**, which impacts up to 316,000 students\* whose needs are not being met in our schools. Only 1/3 of students with reading disabilities are identified as such.\*\* Kate Walsh, President of the National Council on Teacher Quality, observed recently that, "*Researchers long ago identified the reading methods which would reduce the current deplorable rate of reading failure from 30% to somewhere well south of 10%—if only schools would take that step. Teacher prep programs ... are essentially committing malpractice.*"

**We urge you to vote "No" on HB 4822 and 3rd grade retention.** Making Michigan a top 10 state in education must begin by raising the stakes on *curriculum and intervention*. There is solid science on how to teach reading; reform policy must bring what's being taught in classrooms up to pace with the higher standards to which this policy aspires.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of our students and for your service to the state of Michigan!

\*Based on estimates of the total number of students in Michigan and according to estimates by the National Institutes Of Health.

\*\*According to the Connecticut Longitudinal Study and the Yale Center For Dyslexia & Creativity.