



July 2, 2019

The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell
 Chair, Assembly Education Committee
 1020 N Street, Room 159
 Sacramento, California 95814

RE: SB 614 (S. Rubio) as amended July 1, 2019 – OPPOSE

Dear Chairman O'Donnell:

We write in strong opposition to SB 614 (S. Rubio). This bill proposes to repeal explicit language in the Education Code on the foundation skills of research-based reading instruction. SB 614 also would eliminate evidence of competency in science-based reading instruction as a prerequisite to earning a teaching credential in California, with no consistently applied alternative in place to safeguard kids. And, SB 614 would make it more difficult for career-changers and teachers from out-of-state to demonstrate competence in the proven science of reading instruction.

When over half of California's students cannot read at grade level, it is deeply concerning that the state would eliminate the sole uniform requirement for teachers of children in the early grades to demonstrate their knowledge of teaching reading with science-based instruction. It is especially alarming for at-risk students and students with dyslexia, who are often the most in need of strong, explicit, systematic reading instruction in order to become fluent readers.

The bill proposes that the accreditation process of the state's 248 approved teacher preparation programs will sufficiently demonstrate that teachers have been taught the research-proven methods for reading instruction - but with no additional budget augmentation for this added burden of work. Additionally, an audit of California's teacher preparation programs by the National Council on Teacher Quality revealed that only 16% of those programs actually currently teach scientifically-based reading methods. Moreover, the bill provides absolutely no plan for California's audit of the approximately 27,000 other teacher preparation programs across the country, whose many teachers would like to teach in California.

California was a leader in the settled science on teaching reading and working toward providing its teacher candidates strong support in understanding the science of reading instruction so that all families can be sure of the basic promise that their child's teacher knows how to teach reading with proven methods. SB 614 would abandon a rigorous state commitment to reading instruction and leave students and teacher candidates in limbo and subject them to hundreds of different passing standards. This approach is not appropriate as a licensure requirement and would likely subject the state and school districts to costly litigation.

The scientific evidence is clear: Humans don't naturally learn how to read, they must be taught. But SB 614 would deny that science. In fact, it would repeal the state's current explicit statutory reference to the foundation skills of science-based reading instruction altogether and take California backwards to an era where experimental and otherwise non-proven methods for teaching reading were the norm. This would be a serious mistake and one that California's children simply cannot afford.

Accordingly, we strongly urge you to oppose SB 614.

Respectfully,

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Executive Director
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Cc: Senator Susan Rubio, 22nd Senate District
Members, Assembly Education Committee