



PaRa loS niñoS



for the childRen



August 14, 2020

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: SB 614 (Rubio) as amended on August 10, 2020 – OPPOSE

Dear Chair Gonzalez,

We write in continued opposition to SB 614 (S. Rubio) as amended August 10, 2020, which weakens rather than strengthens California's commitment to science-based reading instruction.

Beyond the detrimental consequences this legislation would have on California's children, we question the urgency of requiring the development of a whole new approach to assess reading instruction competency for individual teacher licensure at a new significant General Fund cost to an already underfunded education budget over the next several years. California is grappling with a global pandemic and it is not necessary to enact SB 614 now. The Governor's current Executive

Order (EO) N-66-20 and the actions by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) already address the immediate COVID-19 related adjustments necessary to address all affected teacher candidates' ability to earn a preliminary or clear credential due to disruption in the timing and availability of licensure assessment administrations caused by the pandemic.

SB 614 eliminates the only California Education Code requirement that multiple subject teachers and education specialists study and successfully pass a licensure examination demonstrating competency in the strategies of reading instruction proven by scientific research to work for all students, including English Learners and children with dyslexia.

While the legislative findings give token mention to a serious issue, the codified language of the bill itself is silent on helping students with dyslexia. Furthermore, SB 614 repeals the required study of methods of instruction proven to work by empirical, verifiable and replicable data on programs of instruction at scale that work for all students, including students with dyslexia.

By eliminating reference to instructional strategies such as “organized,” “systematic,” “direct,” and “explicit,” from required course of study in teacher preparation programs and the licensing of new teachers, SB 614 takes California backward and allows the failed whole language approach to teach reading, which resulted in California students reading at the bottom of the nation in 1994 – tied with Louisiana, only better than Guam. Overwhelming empirical evidence demonstrates these strategies do work with all students now and they’ll continue to work with students five, ten and twenty years from now too. By ignoring the science, SB 614 will expand not shrink the school to prison pipeline.

SB 614 also eliminates important protections to ensure any reading instruction competency assessment administered by the CTC adheres to standards of reliability and validity to ensure the instrument is free from bias and valid for purposes of individual licensure. We note on multiple occasions in the fall of 2019, CTC staff publicly testified on the record that the state’s current reading instruction competency assessment has recently successfully passed a bias and content validity review as required by current law.

Nonetheless, the author and proponents of SB 614 continue to erroneously challenge the validity of the current assessment, making efforts to weaken licensure validity even more concerning. Reliability and content validity tied to foundational skills of empirically supported reading instruction strategies should be a requirement of any revised or new licensure assessment. There should be no opening for the continued misleading erroneous statements or misconceptions on whether the instrument(s) used by the CTC are appropriate for individual licensure. Anything less undermines the state’s efforts to establish a statewide uniform minimum standard of competency to ensure all aspiring multiple subject teachers and education specialists know how to successfully teach all students to read.

Particularly in this time of fiscal uncertainty and health challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including school reopening, online learning and related logistics issues, which are consuming to K-12 and teacher preparation program alike, the cost, substance and timing of the changes proposed by SB 614 are flawed and premature. Accordingly, we strongly urge you to hold the bill in committee.

Respectfully,

Tracy Block-Zaretsky
Co-Founder
Dyslexia Training Institute

Katie Braude
Executive Director
Speak UP

Kirk Clark
Executive Vice President
California Business Roundtable

Emma Elizalde, Ed.M.
Board President
Northern California Branch of the
International Dyslexia Association

Margaret Goldberg
Co-Founder
Right to Read Project

Barbara A. Langeloh M.A. ET/P
President
Los Angeles Branch of the International
Dyslexia Association

Bill Lucia
President
EdVoice

Alma Marquez
Founder
La Comadre

Steven Mayo
Executive Board of Directors
San Diego Branch of the International
Dyslexia Association

Tobie Meyer
State Director
Decoding Dyslexia CA

Dan Nieman
Vice President of External Affairs
Para Los Niños

Elaine Offstein, MA, Sp. Ed
President
Southern California Tri-Counties Branch of
International Dyslexia Association

Ana Ponce
Chief Executive Officer
Great Public Schools Now

Kelli Sandman-Hurley, Ed.D.
Co-Founder
Dyslexia Training Institute

Janeen Steel
Founder and Executive Director
Learning Rights Law Center