

Testimony in support of House Bill of HB 2552
An Act Concerning Education;
Kansas Reading Readiness Act amending SA 79-32.117
Given by: Ann Welborn, Director
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Good afternoon members of the Kansas House of Representatives. My name is Ann Welborn and I am currently the Director of the Darrel and Dee Rolph Literacy Academy at the Fundamental Learning Center in Wichita, Kansas. I previously spent thirty-seven years in public school education with the last twenty-five as an elementary principal. I want to thank you all for your efforts in supporting all students in Kansas schools when it comes to reading proficiency.

As an elementary principal, I found it frustrating to see the number of students struggling to read in each grade level including my own son. Teachers and Paras were trained to deliver what was considered evidenced-based curricula but what we now know this was not structured literacy. The NAEP scores for the last thirty years have remained unchanged in Kansas with 67% of 4th grade students performing below proficient in reading in 2019. This directly coincides with the type of reading instruction I observed during my thirty-seven years in public education. This is a huge concern for teachers, parents and students. We know that students who learn differently need to be instructed through a structured literacy program provided by a trained instructor in the areas of reading, writing and spelling. Students who are not taught in this way, will continue to fall further behind in school.

In HB 2552, under New Sec. 7., on page 5 and line 22 (1) insists that reading instruction must use evidence-based practices and programs. Without this bill, school funding will continue to flow to the same instruction that has not worked for the past 30 years. Students who learn differently cannot continue to wait another thirty years. The time is now to put an end to poor reading scores and pass this bill. Children all over Kansas need the opportunity to find the best structured reading program to fit their individual needs. I ask that you please consider passing this bill to help all kids become more confident and proficient readers. It would be a great benefit to many kids and families in Kansas.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and I appreciate all that you do for the great state of Kansas!

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