



March 12, 2024

To: Michigan Lawmakers  
From: Michigan Collaborative Teacher Leaders

We are a group of educators from across Michigan and members of the Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative, a program for highly-effective teachers led by The Education Trust-Midwest and Teach Plus. Through this program, we strive to ensure that our state policies benefit our diverse population of students, especially when it comes to early literacy. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Michigan's 4th grade reading scores were lower than the national average by 4 points in 2022 ([2022 Reading Assessment](#)). These are the lowest scores for our 4th grade students over the last 30 years. It is time to take action. We recommend the following as you consider SB567 and SB568:

+ **Align the timeline for screeners' implementation with that of teachers' training.**

SB 567 requires schools to provide screeners for dyslexia three times a year for grades K-3. The screening assessment would not diagnose dyslexia; it would be used to identify students with characteristics of dyslexia or difficulties in learning to decode. Once a student is identified, teachers alongside literacy coaches would provide evidence-based interventions grounded in the science of reading and principles of structured language and literacy. While we are excited about the legislation, we are concerned about the gap in the rollout timeline. Districts would be administering the screeners by August 2025, yet teachers and literacy consultants wouldn't be required to receive training until the 2027-28 school year. We recommend that all staff, including teachers and literacy coaches, are trained to administer the screeners and use the results to provide a multi-tiered system of support for students with dyslexia prior to or at least simultaneously with the students taking the screener.

*"Early identification and early intervention is key to the success of a child. When students are not identified early, they begin to struggle, their confidence suffers, and learning becomes difficult. Early identification catches a student before their love for learning disappears."*

—Alyssa Henneman, special education teacher, Michigan Collaborative teacher leader

+ **Ensure there are enough literacy coaches per district to adequately support teachers.**

SB 567 outlines the many significant responsibilities of literacy coaches, yet there is typically only one literacy coach available for many teachers. In the bill, literacy coaches are asked to *communicate with families and school officials, provide P.D. to staff, administer progress monitoring, and support teachers in the classroom*. This amount of responsibility is concerning, as many coaches lack hours in the day to do their job as is. According to the March 2023 report on *Michigan's Literacy Landscape*, "Literacy coaches report that insufficient time during the school day to work with teachers is the greatest hindrance to their work, in addition to other time-related constraints such as insufficient time to meet individually with teachers or visit their classrooms." ([EPIC](#)) Increasing the number of literacy coaches is imperative in order to implement SB 567 with high fidelity. Adding more coaches in each school will also prevent literacy coaches' burnout so they can better support student growth.

+ **Require pre-service teachers to teach reading to ensure their effectiveness.**

Teacher programs need to adequately prepare all teachers to provide reading instruction. SB 568 will positively affect undergraduate programs, since it requires schools to teach the characteristics of struggling readings, provides strategies based in the science of reading to prevent and address those challenges, and builds on the MTSS framework for tiered interventions. It will be critical, however, that programs require pre-service teachers to apply what they learned through hands-on reading

instruction practice. In addition, there should be monitoring of programs to ensure they are effective in addressing Michigan's reading crisis.

*"When hired after college, I was placed into a kindergarten classroom where I was asked to teach 25 children how to read, but had never learned any strategies for teaching foundational reading skills."* —  
—Shannon Theis, 3rd grade teacher, Michigan Collaborative teacher leader

Difficulty with decoding and comprehension prevents reading success, for both monolingual and multilingual students, which in turn affects their well-being and progression towards success across all subject areas. Turning SB 567 and 568 into law, with these additional considerations, will be an excellent first step in an ongoing effort to prepare teachers to offer comprehensive literacy instruction for all Michigan students.

Respectfully submitted,

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