

Testimony To: Senate Education Committee on Education

Respectfully Submitted by: Gwen Carmolli, Advisory Council on Literacy Chair, Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association President

Date: February 28, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on literacy bills S.204 and S.303. I serve as the chair of the Advisory Council on Literacy (Council) and President of Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association (VTCLA). These organizations appreciate your past and current support of efforts to increase literacy outcomes for Vermont students.

The Council and VTCLA support the proposed bills. The bills aim to increase professional knowledge of literacy, screen students in the early grades for possible reading difficulties, and provide needs-based - goals that align with Council recommendations, existing state requirements, and work underway in schools.

There are a few areas we ask you to consider as make the edits and decisions on the proposed bills.

S.204

- **Align the language about data collection with state requirements, having District or School send data**, rather than School Board. Districts or Schools hold the responsibility of teaching, assessing and reporting achievement of state standards.
- **Have the bill reflect universal literacy screening of literacy achievement that includes screening for dyslexia characteristics, with follow-up screening and systems of support for students indicating need.** This will align with MTSS, Act 173 and evidence-based practices.
- **Focus on broad policy that can then be specified by the AOE based on current evidence-based research and resources.** Massachusetts has a good example - a state with one of the highest literacy achievement on NAEP in grades 4 and 8 - with a brief policy and then very specific guidelines from their state agency.

S.303

- **Consider a narrower group of educators for the full PD training** - not every role and grade needs the full 46 hr training, and based on other requirements such as School Accountability, Continuous Improvement Planning, and more - there is a great deal work to do in literacy, math, social-emotional, equity, and system of supports. Teachers in the elementary grades, particularly those who teach literacy, have the highest need for the full training. Teachers in other grades or content areas could have some but not the full training. This would prioritize literacy and leave room for other required and necessary professional learning.

Both bills

- **Provide funding for any new requirements in the proposed bills** - With high needs in many areas (literacy, math, social-emotional learning, staffing), funding stressors, and many existing requirements, it is critical to provide funding for any additional mandates.

Conclusion

Thank you for your work to increase literacy achievement; Vermont students are benefitting from your work.