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Dear House Committee on Education,

I speak as a concerned citizen and as a community member of the Vermont Advisory Council on Literacy.

I agree with the previous collaborative language written to restore the intent of Statute 2903. I am asking that you support the wording of Sec. 10 of H.480 (Draft No. 13.2), to ensure supplemental literacy instruction for students significantly below grade level in grades 4-12 in all schools and not just schools with grades K-3.

I note that currently the date for implementing this correction is July 1, 2025. Please, for the sake of older struggling readers, keep that date.

The Agency of Education is implementing Read Vermont, and is already offering training and support to all Vermont teachers. As Ms. Emily Lesh states in written testimony (18 April 2025) to the Senate Education Committee, "In March, over 75 educators participated in a live professional learning workshop focused on adolescent literacy and nearly 200 educators and administrators registered and received the recording for viewing after the live workshops."

Act 139's wording creates inequity for older students, depending on the school they are attending. Delaying implementation will continue inequity for older struggling readers. All struggling readers in grades 4-12 deserve and need support immediately. They are already struggling to access their schoolwork.

Reinstating a previously existing law (Statute 2903) should not need a time delay! Let's help those children immediately.

Thank you for restoring the support for all older struggling readers.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Gardner-Morse
Advisory Council on Literacy, Community Member

Background:

I am one of the Community Members of the Advisory Council on Literacy. I speak for children and their families. I have a lifelong interest in improving literacy for Vermont students. I trained as a teacher at UVM and hold a Masters Degree in reading from Harvard. The parent of three gainfully employed adults with significant dyslexia, I presently work part-time as a Literacy Tutor with schools and private students in central Vermont. Most of my students struggle with their literacy skills. Typically their behavior improves dramatically as their frustration in trying to read is addressed by directly being taught how to read.