

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-220 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENT LITERACY.

Vote Date: 3/18/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 2/23/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill is designed to improve reading outcomes for children in our public schools by identifying struggling readers early and providing targeted, evidence-based support. It creates a grant program to help schools support students in grades 4–6 who are not reading at grade level, requires regular reading assessments in the early grades to catch challenges sooner, and strengthens teacher training in literacy instruction. Together, these steps ensure students receive the support they need to build strong reading skills and succeed academically.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute replaces the requirement to develop individual reading plans with a grant program to develop integrated reading plans and provide support to students in grades 4-6.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Charlene Tucker, Commissioner, CT State Department of Education

The State Department of Education (SDE) supports the overall goal of SB 220 but recommends several key revisions to ensure the bill is targeted, feasible, and aligned with existing systems. This testimony advises limiting required individual reading plans to students performing at the lowest level (Level 1), rather than including those in Level 2, and cautions against using growth metrics as a trigger do to the fact that even high-performing students may not meet growth targets. SDE also urges lawmakers to avoid duplicating existing plans, noting that many students—such as those with IEPs or who are English learners—already have individualized supports in place. Additionally, the Department recommends limiting the

requirement to earlier grade levels, as middle and high schools may lack the staffing and infrastructure needed and suggests leveraging existing laws in Priority School Districts instead of creating entirely new mandates. SDE raises significant concerns about the scale and cost of the proposal, emphasizing that it would require substantial new funding to avoid becoming an unfunded mandate. For high-dosage tutoring, the Department recommends aligning the bill with existing statutes and expanding its use beyond literacy to include mathematics. Finally, while supporting the idea of improving educator literacy training, SDE notes that existing initiatives like ReadConn 2.0 are already addressing this need and would require additional funding and time to expand effectively.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Eric Protulis, Executive Director, EASTCONN

The speaker emphasizes that targeting additional literacy support to struggling students in grades 4–9 addresses a critical developmental window. They connect poor reading skills to the broader issue of “disconnected youth,” arguing that students who enter high school with elementary-level literacy often lose motivation and engagement. The testimony highlights that high-dosage tutoring can significantly improve not only academic performance but overall student outcomes. The author shares concerns about implementation requirements, noting that building literacy teams and managing individualized plans would demand substantial time, staffing, and expertise. They warn that without dedicated and sustained state funding; this could become burdensome unfunded mandates for local school districts. The speaker stresses that the success of the bill depends on aligning its goals with adequate resources.

Meg Scata, Member, Portland Board of Education

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) expresses concern that SB 220 imposes overly prescriptive requirements on school districts, despite supporting the goal of improving student literacy. They object to the bill’s mandate regarding the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success adopting a required list of reading assessments. CABE also raises concerns about the administering of these assessments at least three times per year for all K–3 students. They argue that increasing testing conflicts with efforts to reduce assessment time. While CABE supports the bill’s provision tutoring, they caution that it may not equitably reach all districts in need. CABE urges adjustments to reduce mandates and ensure equitable access to resources while maintaining literacy goals.

Michael Morton, Deputy Executive Director, School & State Finance Project

This testimony supports this bill as an important step toward improving student literacy. He emphasizes that many students (particularly those in under-resourced districts) continue to struggle with reading beyond the early grades. This testimony states that literacy challenges are tied to broader issues of educational equity, noting that students with greater needs often require additional support and resources. He supports the bill’s focus on identifying struggling readers and providing structured interventions to help them succeed. However, he stresses

that for the bill to be effective, it must be accompanied by adequate and equitable funding to ensure districts can implement these supports.

Rebecca Martinez, State Representative, Connecticut General Assembly

This testimony expresses strong support, emphasizing the importance of addressing literacy challenges for students beyond the early elementary years. She argues that many students in grades 4–9 continue to struggle with reading and need structured, targeted interventions to succeed. Martinez highlights that improving literacy at these later stages is critical for academic performance and long-term outcomes like graduation rates and career readiness. She supports the bill's approach of implementing individualized reading plans to better meet students' needs. Additionally, she underscores the broader equity implications, noting that students who fall behind in reading are often disproportionately impacted and require more support. Martinez frames the bill as a necessary step toward closing achievement gaps and ensuring all students have access to the tools they need to succeed.

Steven Hernandez, Esq., Executive Director, ConnCAN

In this testimony, the author starts by saying that this will not be an overnight success. He stresses the importance of specific and individualized steps for each student. This testimony applauds the implantation of more High-Dosage Literacy Tutoring. The author says that Section 3 of the bill aligns curriculum decisions made with the assessment tools necessary to support student learning effectively. And, if implemented with the commitment to technical support, Connecticut can provide an excellent literacy education for each student. This testimony also shows support for Section 4 and Section 5 of the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Allison Quirion, Founder, Decoding Dyslexia-CT

This testimony includes a very detailed chart regarding the edits they believe are necessary to pass the bill. It argues that while the bill risks repeating past failures due to bad implementation, lack of accountability, and insufficient alignment with evidence-based practices. The testimony emphasizes that Connecticut already struggles to properly identify and support students with dyslexia and warns that adding new mandates without fixing existing systems will not improve outcomes. The author stresses the need for strong oversight, clear standards, and adherence to the “science of reading”.

Anne Manusky, National Director, CT Republican Assembly

This testimony states that the bill will impose significant unfunded mandates on school districts. She expresses concern that requiring individualized reading plans for many students would overwhelm already strained schools, both financially and logistically. The author emphasizes that nearly half of Connecticut students could qualify for these plans, making implementation unrealistic without substantial new funding. She also questions the use on standardized test scores to determine which students need intervention. Additionally, the

testimony states that expanding mandates to higher grade levels may divert resources and attention away from early literacy, where intervention is most effective.

Diane Willcuts, Director, Education Advocacy LLC

This testimony argues that the bill risks creating rigid, one-size-fits-all mandates that may not effectively address students' literacy needs. The author expresses concern that relying heavily on standardized assessments to identify struggling readers is flawed. The testimony emphasizes that literacy challenges—especially for students with disabilities—require more individualized evaluation and intervention approaches. It also warns that layering additional required reading plans could duplicate or conflict with existing supports, such as IEPs, creating unnecessary complexity for educators and families. Additionally, the author raises concerns about implementation, noting that schools may lack the specialized expertise and resources needed to carry out the bill effectively.

Meghan Rosenfeld, Regional School Director

In this testimony, the author highlights three problems with the bill. One, that the bill skips the important reform: aligning core reading instruction with the science of reading. Two, that the bill starts intervention too late and without funding. Three, that there is not enough preparation and support for the teachers to implement this bill. The author asks the Committee specifically to mandate science-of-reading-aligned core curriculum through Grade 9, lower the reading plan trigger to Grade 3, fund the work and train the teachers before mandating the shift, and remove 'as practicable' from the reading specialist requirement.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, CT Association of Public-School Superintendent

In this testimony, CAPSS appreciates the legislature's continued attention on to student literacy and supports the goals of SB 220. The author urges the Committee to ensure that new requirements in this legislation are adequately funded and that districts keep the autonomy necessary to implement literacy supports. CAPSS does not support the expansion of mandated assessments as it would increase the burden of testing without improving outcomes.

Jessica King

This testimony supports increasing the ECS foundation amount to reflect inflation and address inequities in school funding. It talks about how underfunding disproportionately affects high-need students—especially multilingual learners—by limiting access to essential support services and creating unequal learning conditions based on zip code. The author also opposes increased charter school funding, arguing it diverts resources from traditional public schools that serve the highest-need populations. This testimony calls for a more equitable and accountable funding system to ensure all students receive a high-quality education regardless of where they live.

Kate Dias, President, Connecticut Education Association (CEA)

In this testimony, the author highlights four concerns with the bill as written. First, this bill brings in additional testing on already over-tested students, diminishing engagement, increasing anxiety, and pulling students away from instruction. Second, the bill relays more on a tutor's implementation of Individual Reading Plans rather than certified educators with knowledge and ongoing professional development. Third, the author believes that this is another unfunded mandate. Relaying on temporary grants will eventually lead to districts absorbing these costs. Lastly, she states that districts still need time to see the results of previous legislation before moving on. The Connecticut's Right to Read (Science of Reading) are still in the early stages of fully implementing. For these reasons, the author encourages reconsideration of SB 220.

Stacey Tie, Secretary, Special Education Equity Kids

In this testimony it states that the goal of supporting struggling readers is essential and urgent. However, it states that for this legislation to truly change outcomes, it must ensure early intervention, guaranteed funding, strong tutor training standards, adequate instructional time, transportation access, enforcement of this and current regulations, and alignment with peer-reviewed reading science. Without these safeguards, the author claims that the bill risks identifying struggling readers without providing the level of instruction needed to change their trajectory.

Valerie Stolfi-Collins, Parent of Public-School Children

While the testimony agrees with the bill, they believe that there is no one hired in the school to carry out the legislation. Testimony states that the committee must ensure that there are more trained literacy specialists (per the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) standards), ensure there is transparency between schools and parents with regards to testing and results, and that the financial support to our municipalities and school districts is available and consistent to meet the critically important goal.

Willie Medina, Board of Education Member, Bridgeport Board of Education

This testimony urges the committee to fix Connecticut's ECS education funding formula, arguing it has failed to keep up with inflation and lacks a cost-of-living adjustment, leaving districts like Bridgeport underfunded. It emphasizes that students cannot succeed without adequate resources and that fair funding is a matter of justice, not just policy. While acknowledging proposed education bills, the author contends they would be less necessary if the core funding issue were addressed. He calls on lawmakers to take meaningful action to ensure all children, regardless of location, have an equal opportunity to succeed.

