

Thank you to the chair, committee members, and to the bill sponsors for the opportunity to share my support of SB 19-199.

My name is Jennifer McCammon and I am currently a special education coordinator in Aurora Public Schools, an adjunct professor, and a mom of a 3rd grader and an incoming kindergartner. I spend a lot of my time as a school district employee, a professor and a parent advocating, educating and researching research-based practices for teaching students to read. In my work, I always link back to the wealth of research available to educators in teaching students to read.

One student that sticks out in my mind is a student named B. Although we often think about students in the early grades when we refer to the READ Act, B was a senior in high school about to graduate the system when I met him. As part of our work at the high school level, we had assessed several of our students and implemented a reading program for adolescents that explicitly taught all five components of reading. One day, I was visiting the classroom and trying to problem solve some technical difficulties we were having with the computer component of the program. B was one of the students that was not able to login to the computer portion. B came up to me and said, "Ms, are you going to be able to fix this soon? This is the first time I am starting to learn to read and I am graduating soon". While we were able to fix the immediate issue, I often wonder how things could have been different had B been matched with the right instruction at a much earlier age.

When I advocate on behalf of SB 19-199, I ask you to think about B and the many students like him around the state that do not currently have access to high quality reading instruction in all five components of reading around the state of Colorado. Students are graduating across the state without the basic literacy skills necessary to access higher education or to gain competitive employment.

When revising and implementing the READ act, I ask that you prioritize high quality professional development in how the brain learns to read and research-based methodology for all elementary teachers. We need to ensure teachers know how to teach all students to read. In B's case, he was nearly 18 years old before he felt the success of learning to read. B should have felt this success in kindergarten.

In addition, schools and districts must be held more accountable to use curriculum and strategies that have been vetted and reviewed by the literacy team at CDE and their representative stakeholder group. The current READ act allows for districts to employ methodology that does not currently align to research and often places an over reliance on teaching comprehensions skills at the sake of teaching foundational skills such as phonological awareness and phonics. Imagine what we could have done had B been given the opportunity to build his foundational reading skills at a much younger age. We can't allow schools to "opt" out of using the research that supports teaching all students to read. We owe it to B and all the other students around the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Jennifer McCammon, Ed.D.
jennmccammon11@gmail.com
970-405-6064