

March 20, 2023

Dear Chair Youakim and Members of the Education Finance Committee:

I am a life-long educator. *There is nothing I value more than supporting students of all ages in learning to read and write and exercise their intellect.*

I strongly support public education. *I hope that our legislators will dig deeply and learn as much as possible about important and complex issues like the teaching of reading.*

I value democratic processes. *I continue to hope that the information, objections, questions, and criticisms offered by me and colleagues from diverse institutions of higher education would be afforded respectful consideration and curiosity.*

Today, I offer two observations and several questions for your consideration:

1. “The Read Act” will codify a particular definition of reading (the simple view of reading). It will mandate an approach to teaching reading that has *not* been found by peer-reviewed research studies to be the “magic bullet” as described by activists who support a phonics-first approach. It “sanctions” certain ideas over others and will “sanction” those who do not conform, including institutions of higher education.¹ ***Is this okay for our state?***
2. The State of Minnesota is poised to spend 100M on a specific program, specific curriculum, and specific teacher training materials. ***Where are the evaluation studies that lead to confidence in these specific choices? Why do we know this is the right path? What information and whose voices are missing from this debate? Why?***

I most certainly welcome any opportunities for discussion about the ideas in this testimony.

Thank you,

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¹ See Reinking, Hruby, & Risko, 2023.

² This written testimony does not represent any official policy or position by my employer Augsburg University. The statements here are mine alone.