



To the members of the Alaska Senate Education Committee:

ExcelinEd in Action stands in strong support of Senate Bill 111, and thanks the committee for sponsoring and considering this crucial legislation. Our organization has supported the passage and implementation of comprehensive early literacy policy in 13 states over many years, and we write today to share what we have learned.

We know that learning to read by the end of third grade is the gateway to lifelong success. When students are not able to read by the end of third grade, their risk of falling behind grows exponentially. Research shows that nearly 90 percent of high school dropouts were struggling readers in third grade. High school dropouts are not eligible for 90 percent of the jobs in our economy and make up nearly half of the heads-of-households on welfare. Seven out of ten prison inmates cannot read above a 4th grade level. We know that ensuring all kids can read by the end of third grade sets them on the path to learn, graduate, and succeed.

The goal of SB111 and any strong comprehensive early literacy policy is to ensure all students read on grade level by the end of third grade. The policy ensures early identification of struggling readers and establishes intensive reading intervention for K-3 students who need more help to become successful readers. The policy gives struggling third grade students extra time to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade, when students transition from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*.

Among the states that have implemented strong comprehensive early literacy policy, the results are clear and strong:

- Six states with early literacy programs are **improving faster than the national average** on the NAEP fourth grade reading assessment.
- Mississippi's NAEP fourth grade reading score has **increased by 11 points** since implementation.
- Ohio has seen a **12% increase in students reading on grade level** since implementation.

Supporting comprehensive early literacy policy is key to Alaska's success.

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