

**March 18, 2025**

To: House Public Education Committee

Re: House Bill 123

Position: For

**Honorable Chair Buckley and Members of the House Public Education Committee,**

The Commit Partnership, Texas 2036, and 17 supporting organizations appreciate the opportunity to submit **written testimony in support of House Bill 123 (HB 123)**. With only 46% of Texas 3rd graders reading on grade level and 43% meeting grade-level standards in math,<sup>1</sup> we commend the House’s commitment to data-driven strategies that support early learners. The 2024 NAEP results highlighted students performing at grade level have maintained steady progress but those with the most significant learning gaps continue to fall further behind, emphasizing the urgent need to address and enhance student achievement. Under current policies, many Texas families and school districts lack visibility into a student’s academic progress before these critical milestones. **We commend the House on HB 123 taking a bold step forward in ensuring that every Texas student has access to early literacy and numeracy progress monitoring, targeted interventions, and provide parents with foundational support necessary for students to succeed in school life after high school.**

**I. EARLY LITERACY AND NUMERACY PROGRESS MONITORING: HB 123 ENSURES SCHOOLS AND PARENTS HAVE CRUCIAL DATA ON STUDENT DEVELOPMENT**

Texas currently lacks a consistent, statewide approach to literacy and numeracy progress monitoring in grades K-3. In SY22-23, statewide reliable progress data for nearly 800,000 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders was unavailable, leaving missed opportunities for intervention with learning gaps compounding over time.<sup>2</sup> Without this information, parents are often unaware of their child’s reading gaps and school districts miss opportunities for providing additional support ahead of 3rd grade. Additionally, 89% of voters support requiring schools to identify students struggling to read prior to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and as early as Kindergarten.<sup>3</sup>

HB 123 strengthens early literacy and numeracy policy by ensuring school districts utilize approved reading and numeracy screeners through effective progress monitoring at the beginning, middle, and end of each school year for K-3 students. HB 123 further ensures timely parental notifications and school board reporting to ensure transparency in student progress. By equipping parents, educators, and school leaders with clear, reliable data, HB 123 guarantees intervention before gaps widen and ensures students receive the necessary support to meet grade-level expectations. **We applaud the House for its commitment to establishing evidence-based literacy and numeracy screeners, transparent progress monitoring and reporting, and required interventions for struggling students with at home learning support.**

**II. EARLY LITERACY INTERVENTION: HB 123 GUARANTEES TARGETED SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS STRUGGLING TO READ**

---

<sup>1</sup> TEA, STAAR 2024

<sup>2</sup> PEIMS, 2023-2024 Enrollment.

<sup>3</sup> Ragnar Research Partners, Commit Statewide Poll. (Nov. 2024).

91% of Texas voters support schools being required to provide additional support to struggling readers early on so they can read at grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.<sup>4</sup> Of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students who did not meet grade-level reading expectations in 2019, less than 1 in 5 (or 18%) caught up in three years. Conversely, students who learn to read by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are 4 times more likely to graduate high school.<sup>5</sup> Without effective interventions, academic gaps persist and widen, making it increasingly difficult for students to succeed in later grades.

HB 123 ensures students identified as at-risk after 2 consecutive reading screenings receive intervention through classroom teachers and interventionists until they catch up or reach 4<sup>th</sup> grade. If a district utilizes a high-quality, approved, research-based reading intervention, the district is entitled to an allotment of \$250 per student, capped at 10% of enrolled K-3 students. HB 123 ensures that struggling readers are provided with effective, structured interventions designed to improve phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and fluency. Nationally, targeted tutoring sessions have emerged as an effective way to address student’s reading problems<sup>6</sup>, and **we appreciate the aligned evidence-based focus on the science of reading and ensured delivery by trained educators and interventionists with funding support for districts, maximizing the likelihood of student success. We applaud the commitment to strong parental engagement by equipping families with timely literacy progress reports, research-based tools, and options to support at-home learning.**

**III. READING AND MATH ACADEMIES: HB 123 CREATES IMPROVEMENTS TO READING AND MATH ACADEMIES WITH FUNDING TO SUPPORT DISTRICTS** Teacher efficacy is the most significant in-school factor affecting student success.<sup>7</sup> HB 3 (86R) created reading academies to strengthen K-3 literacy support and place effective educators in early-grade classrooms. HB 1605 (2023) further advanced math and literacy by creating state-owned textbooks with teacher training, vocabulary and book lists, and eliminating ineffective reading strategies. While progress has been made, Texas has yet to fully implement national best practices, and policies should be strengthened to better support foundational academic achievement. Only 36% of elementary and middle school principals in Texas report that all or most all their math teachers demonstrate deep knowledge of math instruction, and only 41% have a deep knowledge of math.<sup>8</sup>

HB 123 builds on the commitment of HB 3 and HB 1605 by ensuring our educators are ready to teach foundational academic reading and math skills through the expansion of reading and math academies to train interventionists in evidence-based practices that enhance student outcomes while also removing the academies’ expiration. **We appreciate the continued investment in these evidence-based academies and the newly allocated funding to support teachers attending them outside their contract hours.**

#### **IV. TARGETED FUNDING: HB 123 EXPANDS EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS**

HB 123 makes strategic investments in programs proven to accelerate learning and address early literacy deficits, including:

---

<sup>4</sup> Ragnar Research Partners, Commit Statewide Poll. (Nov. 2024).

<sup>5</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*.

<sup>6</sup> Novic, S. & Loeb S. (2024). *Lessons from the Early Literacy Tutoring Landscape*. Kappan.

<sup>7</sup> Opper, Isaac M. (2019). *Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers’ Impact on Student Achievement*. RAND.

<sup>8</sup> Rand, *Elementary and Middle School Opportunity Structures That Factor into Students’ Math Learning Findings from the American Mathematics Educator Study*. (2024).

- **Expanding the Early Education Allotment (EEA):** Additional funding for K-3 students who are economically disadvantaged or emergent bilingual, ensures critical literacy supports reach the students who need them most. **We appreciate the efforts to increase the Early Education Allotment and respectfully suggest amending language so that prekindergarten students generate the 0.1 EEA weight, rather than increasing funding for existing students generating the weight. Including prekindergarten students in the EEA can strengthen access to high-quality early education and provide school systems with resources to support schools' ability to offer high-quality Pre-K and implement evidence-based acceleration strategies before 3rd grade.**

**V. CLOSING**

We commend the House's commitment to strengthening early education policy and supporting all Texas students to be equipped with the foundational skills necessary for long-term success. When adults focus on foundational academic years before 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, we support more students with a strong academic start, catch up those who fall behind early on, and ultimately prepare more students for success following high school graduation. **HB 123 presents a bold, evidence-based approach to identifying academic struggles early, intervening effectively, and empowering educators and families with the tools they need to support student learning. We appreciate the leadership early learner academic success and look forward to continued collaboration to advance HB 123 and invest in Texas' future by prioritizing early literacy and numeracy success.**

Gratefully,

Kate Greer  
Managing Director, Policy and State Coalition  
The Commit Partnership

Gabe Grantham  
Policy Advisor  
Texas 2036

**Supporting Organizations:**

