



The Education Trust–Midwest

June 23, 2021

Testimony in support of Senate Bills 380 – 383

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bills 380 – 383. Together, these bills would make great strides toward ensuring that young students are screened for characteristics of dyslexia, that appropriate family communication and interventions are deployed, and that educators have the training and support to recognize and meet the needs of dyslexic students in their classrooms.

Over the past several years, legislators on both sides of the aisle have rightly focused on Michigan’s literacy crisis. You have introduced tools to screen for reading deficiencies, provided for Individual Reading Improvement Plans, and the state has allocated more than \$200 million in an effort to improve reading rates.

This focus is well placed. The year before Michigan’s read-by-grade-three law was passed, half of all third-grade students were not considered proficient in English language arts at the end of the school year. For the last year with available data, 2018-19, proficiency had decreased even further. During that school year, 54.9 percent of third graders were not proficient at the end of the school year in English language arts.

There are likely many reasons that Michigan’s spending and investments have not led to the improved results that we all hope for. Among these reasons, however, is a lack of focus on supporting students with dyslexia.

This challenge stems from limited identification of students who may be dyslexic, supports that do not focus on decoding and word recognition skills, and professional training for new and in-service educators that fails to focus on this sizable portion of the student population. Fortunately, this package of bills takes critical steps to address these issues.

If passed, these bills will provide a clear, common and internationally accepted definition of dyslexia, establish regular screening of students for characteristics of dyslexia, promote parents as partners in literacy education, and ensure that educators are well-supported to meet the needs of students in their classroom. Ultimately, when students are struggling to read because they exhibit one or more characteristics of dyslexia, they and their teachers have greater supports to overcome the challenge and succeed.

Michigan students are incredibly capable and talented. Yet today, that potential remains untapped for far too many students because they remain unidentified and under-supported.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that every student, including those exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia, are supported to learn to read and succeed in school and beyond.