



Letter sent to members of the legislative conference committee on HB 4822,
third-grade reading legislation

April 5, 2016

Dear Legislator:

We all agree that children should be provided the supports they need to become proficient in reading by the end of the third grade. Students who fail to reach this critical benchmark are more likely to fall further behind and often drop out before earning a high school diploma. Low-income students are at higher risk of low literacy skills than their peers from higher-income families and well-resourced schools.

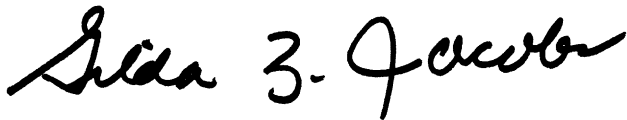
As you debate the details of House Bill 4822 in conference committee, the Michigan League for Public Policy urges you to include the following components:

- If the smart promotion policy remains, exemptions must be allowed as outlined in the Senate version of HB 4822 for parents/guardians; reading teachers or principals; students with an individualized education program (IEP); Limited English Proficient students; students previously retained; and newly enrolled students with evidence that the student did not receive an appropriate reading improvement plan;
- Any smart promotion and retention policy included should not apply to third-grade students any earlier than the 2019-2020 school year as included in both versions of the bill;
- Early identification, monitoring and intervention for all students demonstrating a need for additional assistance to read;
- Alternative means to determine proficiency, including the three methods outlined in both versions of the bill;
- Parental engagement as much as possible, including in the reading improvement plans ; and
- Encouragement of summer camps and use of “Read at Home” plans to provide additional and enhanced opportunities for learning and assistance.

The League has been supportive of the smart promotion policy combined with early and ongoing interventions, good cause exemptions and alternative means for determining proficiency as a compromise to complete retention without flexibility. However, studies have demonstrated several negative effects of grade retention which cannot be ignored, including the higher likelihood that the student will become disengaged and ultimately drop out of high school.

We thank you for all that you are doing on behalf of the children in Michigan and urge you to consider these recommendations to improve this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gilda Z. Jacobs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gilda Z. Jacobs
President and CEO