



INFO@MASB.ORG | MASB.ORG | 517.327.5900
1001 Centennial Way, Suite 400 • Lansing, Michigan 48917-8249

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee
From: Jennifer Smith, Director of Government Relations
Brenda Pilgrim, Assistant Director of Government Relations
Date: Feb. 13, 2024

RE: Concerns with Senate Bills 567

The Michigan Association of School Boards strongly supports ensuring we are identifying kids with signs of dyslexia as well as any other reading disabilities. However, we have numerous concerns with the details of Senate Bill 567, leading us to remain opposed. This bill would change how we screen our young students and support them, especially those with dyslexia. We firmly believe our concerns must be addressed before the bills move forward.

Primarily, we are concerned that these bills will divert supports from other struggling readers that do not show signs of dyslexia. Specific changes made to language in the current law, particularly with our English Language Learners, gives us pause. It clearly states on page 15 of the S-1 bill that they would receive supports as ELL students if they also showed signs of dyslexia. This could potentially exclude ELL students from assistance for any other literacy issues.

Further, we have broad concerns with the overly prescriptive nature of the bills. The outright ban of certain techniques and the mandate of others could pose significant challenges. As experts continue to study the science of reading, best practices can change, but if enacted, Michigan would be bound to what is required by SB567 until the law was changed. If the bill was less prescriptive and offered a more flexible approach, schools could better adapt to their students and changing guidance.

Finally, these bills impose significant new requirements on our already overburdened and understaffed educators. At a time when we are striving to expand our teaching pool, adding further responsibilities to our current teachers and literacy coaches will only harm our efforts. While expanding resources in the state budget for literacy is welcome and needed, it will not create the people we can hire or encourage potential educators to join the profession.

Outlined on the back of this memo are specific questions about the bill we have raised. We urge you to carefully consider whether or not this legislation as written can be implemented by all districts with fidelity and truly benefit all students with reading difficulties before moving it out of committee.

Specific question for SB567 (S-1)

P6, line 22: Requires the department to update its list of approved screeners between August and December 2024. What if the bill has not passed by then or doesn't have immediate effect? This should be a Spring 2025 date.

P. 7, subsection (6): Who creates the professional learning – does the district create their own or will it be created and provided by MDE?

P.7-8 subsection 6 – Who pays for the cost of the professional learning – the district, the teacher, or the state?

p.9, lines 2-4: Is this designed so that a student must take three different assessments three times a year or does it require a school to pick three different assessments and then use the appropriate one for each student? The language is not clear.

P.12, line 14 – This removes specific ways to help teach reading. Why would we take these options away completely? Shouldn't we allow for whatever best fits the student related to their reading deficiency?

P.15 line 5: For ELL students, it says there will be intervention services if the student is an ELL **AND** identified as having characteristics of dyslexia. This means that no other ELL student would receive services if they were struggling. Later in the bill (page 21) it covers which ELL students would get the specific dyslexia services. This language is excluding a portion of the student body, which would be detrimental to their learning.

p.23, subsection (iii) – This again bans certain methods. Can those methods be used for students with other reading struggles? We should not limit options to help all kids.

p.31, lines 13-16 – We have schools that do not have foreign language anymore because they cannot find teachers. Requiring a bilingual or English as a second language teacher for all districts may not be possible and therefore the district would violate the definition of a multidisciplinary team through no fault of their own.

p.33, line 2: Why is the definition of screening assessment so much more detailed than in the as introduced version? Is it necessary?

