



### **HB 5111 — Hold back 3<sup>rd</sup> graders who don't test proficient in reading**

Introduced by Rep. Price; version H-3 reported from House Edu. Cmte.; analysis as of 12/10/2013

#### ***Why this deserves your attention:***

Helping all children to read, enjoy reading, and read effectively, is one of the central tasks we expect of our public schools. This bill would focus, however, on stigmatizing students, teachers and schools who do not meet an arbitrary deadline for “proficient” reading. Moreover, that “proficiency” measure is based on scores on a state standardized test which has not yet been selected. A companion bill, HB 5144, would identify, but not fund, intervention programs. The Governor’s FY2015 budget proposal makes some existing funding for “at-risk” students available for reading programs, but includes no new funds for this.

#### ***What the bill would do***

Starting with students entering first grade in the 2014-15 school year, a student could not enroll in fourth grade unless they had received a score of “proficient” on the third grade state reading assessment (the state standardized test required under current Federal law). A student could not be retained for more than two years.

Students entering a school at grade four would have to have received a “proficient” score in order to enroll in grade four.

A district superintendent or charter chief administrator would be able to issue a “good cause exemption” under the following circumstances:

- The student took an alternative standardized reading assessment (approved by the state) and demonstrated ability at grade level;
- The student demonstrated grade 3 level reading ability through a portfolio of work that covers all state reading standards for grade 3;
- The student has a disability and has an IEP that indicates the state reading test is not appropriate;
- The student is an English language learner with less than two years of instruction in an ELL program;

Requests for an exemption can be made by the parents or the student’s third grade teacher. In addition, if the parents and teacher agree, the student can re-take the state exam.

Students advanced to fourth grade under an exemption must be provided with intensive reading instruction.

As many as 34%, or 37,750, students could be affected.

### **OUR TAKE**

#### **Getting all children to read is easy, right?**

We at MIPFS absolutely believe that we should do all we can to ensure children are able to read - and to understand and evaluate what they read. Steps to catch children who are having trouble should start early. This kind of effort takes smart people and resources for quality programs.

- The bill, now under consideration by the full House, doesn’t address any of these things. It’s based on the idea that getting any child to read “proficiently,” no matter what struggles they face, is a simple and clear task. Schools and teachers who don’t accomplish this feat are simply “not doing their jobs.” The answer? Punish kids - and make their parents angry.
- They’ve softened the bill a bit since it was first introduced, but the basic thrust is still the same. Instead of helping schools serve challenged students, instead of providing the resources schools need to run quality reading programs, the bill proposes simply to hold students back. Does this make any sense to you? It certainly doesn’t to us.

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