

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Education Policy and Administration Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 671, which proposes the establishment of a Kindergarten Literacy Readiness Program in New Hampshire. This legislation is an essential step forward in preparing our youngest learners for academic success and addressing the challenges currently faced by our education system.

The rising cost of special education is a significant and growing concern for school districts throughout the state. Enrollment numbers in special education programs continue to increase, placing a heavy financial burden on schools and communities. While we are committed to providing essential support for students in need, it is critical to recognize that many of these costs could be mitigated through early intervention and preparation.

HB 671 offers a proactive and cost-effective solution by focusing on prevention rather than remediation. The proposed program emphasizes early literacy readiness for 4- and 5-year-old children, equipping them with foundational skills in reading, math, and science before they enter kindergarten. Research shows that children who participate in high-quality early literacy programs are less likely to fall behind academically, reducing the likelihood of requiring costly special education services in later years.

From a financial perspective, implementing a program like this is a comparatively inexpensive way to ensure students enter school ready to succeed. By leveraging home-based and center-based educational technology, the program provides accessible and scalable resources for families, while also keeping costs manageable. This approach ensures equitable access for children across New Hampshire, including those in rural and underserved communities where early childhood resources may be limited.

Additionally, the program's focus on family engagement recognizes the crucial role parents and caregivers play in a child's early learning. By empowering families with tools to support their children, HB 671 builds a strong foundation for collaboration between families and schools, further enhancing student outcomes.

The benefits of this program extend far beyond reducing special education costs. Early literacy programs have been shown to improve academic achievement, graduation rates, and workforce readiness. They also contribute to stronger communities by fostering lifelong skills that enable individuals to contribute meaningfully to society.

The cost of inaction is far greater than the investment required to implement HB 671. Children who enter school unprepared are more likely to struggle academically, leading to frustration, disengagement, and the need for additional interventions. This cycle not only affects the individual child but also impacts teachers, families, and peers. By investing in kindergarten literacy readiness, we have the opportunity to break this cycle and provide every child with the tools they need to succeed.

I urge the committee to support HB 671 and recognize it as a necessary and forward-thinking step in improving education in New Hampshire. This program will not only position our children for success but will also help alleviate the growing financial strain on our schools and communities.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I appreciate your commitment to ensuring the success and well-being of New Hampshire's students.

Sincerely,

Jonah Schulte
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