

LaKeshia Myers AB446 Testimony 21 October 2021

[00:00:00] **LaKeshia Myers:** One of the things I wanted to, um, I guess bring up about this bill is that I went back, watched the hearing again, looked at some of the things that were brought up about looking at reading screenings and diagnostic assessments for students and figure out where students are as far as reading is concerned.

[00:00:28] I have to say that, that I know some members of my party may be surprised that I agree with this, but let me tell you why I agree with this because we have had curriculum change after curriculum change. We have had intervention after interview. And realistically, it's time to call a spade a spade. When I look at [00:01:00] students that are across the state that look like me and have the, the wide ranging deficits in reading and math that exist, it's hurtful.

[00:01:14] And that's not to put blame on educators because you, you deal with what's in front of you. I understand that. But let's not act like this does not exist and I'm the first person to be skeptical. So I'll say that I'm the first person to be skeptical, but after looking at what the bill actually says, what it proposes to do, we'll utilize certain things like this already, but they're not utilizing all schools.

[00:01:45] And I will say this bill is not perfect because even in my conversations with the Senate author, um, about the bill wanting to make sure that it captures students that may participate in, [00:02:00] um, parochial school programs under the school choice program, and trying to figure that out and trying to have those conversations and looking at what we could do legally.

[00:02:13] And how we could get some students services in that area as well. There's a way to do it through title one. And maybe that's a separate conversation on how to utilize that funding that certain schools do get through title one and utilizing them through the CSUs. I think this presents a opportunity for CSUs to work with their school district, to make sure that they are providing opportunities for schools to utilize reading services that are in those interviews.

[00:02:42] So that was one issue that I had that I saw that I said, okay, I'd like it to be a little bit wider reaching, but it's not there. But when we think about trying to capture the majority of students and get them on the right track early enough, I remember in this body, we [00:03:00] passed the, the issue, the, um, the pilot study was Waterford last session.

[00:03:07] And I checked in with them. And I'm trying to help them capture more students across the states so we can make that program work. And then looking at something like this, which would be just a screening to get students that Curt and parents that cursory knowledge of where they can go to get help for their students.

[00:03:25] I think that's where we are. I think that this is an issue for people of color in our, in my community, specifically for African-American and Hispanic students. When we deal with. That are coming into the classroom at a deficit. This is something that would help at this point in time. It's not about politics for me.

[00:03:46] It's about actually getting the work done and making sure that we give our students the best chances that they can. So it's not a Democrat thing for me. It's not a Republican thing for me. It's about business and it's about [00:04:00] making sure that these kids actually know how to read so that when they get to middle school, And they get to high school.

[00:04:07] We're not dealing with kids. It's worn five grade levels behind because they don't teach reading in middle school because the thought process is, is you should already be at a certain level

to get there. But there are teachers who have to remediate even in middle and high schools and it's becoming more and more difficult to do that.

[00:04:27] So if we could help at the earliest stages and get this information, get parents on the right track. Get them services, which do exist, whether through libraries, whether through tutors, for parents who can't afford that, whether through community organizations and churches, because they offer that as well.

[00:04:49] I think this is a start to get that going. And I know there've been conversations about what DPI is doing and what they've said. Let us remember the DPI as a guidance [00:05:00] organization, they provide guidance. This is about making sure that we step in and help guidance is good. But when we consistently see the deficit growing, at some point in time, you have to put guidance aside and put some teeth behind what we're trying to do.

[00:05:23] And I know some of my colleagues who are educators are not going to agree with me. You're not going to agree with me on anything.

[00:05:32] I'm sorry, if you feel that I'm wrong, but as an educator, as an African-American and as a person that is a teacher that sees this firsthand working with students still on a daily basis, we got to do something we got to do. So that's where I am the chairman. Thank you, representative. And you can count this member is someone [00:06:00] who is not surprised that you voted this way, because I know how deeply you think about all these things and how important it is for you that we make changes in that regard.

[00:06:10] So thank you for your very wise comments.