

The Reading Excellence and Achievement for Development (“READ”) Act *Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH)*

Background:

The 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed the lowest average 12th-grade reading scores since the exam began in 1992. Millions of students are leaving high school without the ability to read proficiently, limiting their opportunities for higher education, workforce success, and long-term economic mobility. Ultimately, these low literacy rates come at a significant cost to taxpayers, an estimated \$224 billion annually, and American businesses, nearly \$40 billion in lost productivity.

Despite these troubling trends, states have demonstrated that meaningful progress is possible when literacy instruction is grounded in evidence-based practices aligned with the science of reading. Mississippi has emerged as a national model, rising from 49th in the nation to the top ten in fourth grade reading achievement on NAEP after implementing statewide literacy reforms. These reforms included requiring districts to adopt phonics-based instructional materials, investing in intensive teacher training, deploying literacy coaches, and conducting early reading assessments to identify struggling students before they fall behind. Fortunately, many states have followed this model to address the decline in childhood literacy. As of 2025, 44 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws related to the science of reading.

The Reading Excellence and Achievement for Development (“READ”) Act would strengthen literacy instruction and improve reading outcomes for students by supporting the implementation of science of reading-aligned practices, improving educator preparation, and expanding access to high-quality instructional materials and interventions aligned with the science of reading.

Specifically, the bill:

- Modifies the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant program by establishing a new reservation of funds to provide grants to eligible low-performing States. States receiving funds under this set-aside must, within one year of receiving funds, conduct a statewide literacy needs assessment and complete a comprehensive literacy instruction plan based on that assessment.
- Supports state implementation of evidence-based practices anchored in the science of reading, including by investing in literacy coaches and incentivizing the use of high-quality instructional materials.
- Requires states to provide early literacy screening, including for dyslexia, at least once before third grade.
- Requires states receiving grants to conduct evaluations of teacher preparation programs to ensure alignment with the science of reading.
- Requires schools serving students in kindergarten through grade 8 to notify parents or guardians when a child is identified as at risk of reading difficulties or performing below grade level at the beginning of the year and following any through-year literacy screening.
- Promotes early identification and intervention for students at risk of reading difficulties, including dyslexia, through early screening.
- Protects and strengthens literacy research capacity through comprehensive centers and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES).