



February 8, 2022

Dear Senate Education Committee,

We at Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL) are writing to you today because of our concerns with the role of public libraries in SB22-004: Evidence Based Training in the Science of Reading.

Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy has worked to strengthen children's literacy across the state since our founding in 2008. We have over 1000 members across the country, most of whom reside in Colorado. We advocate for literacy for all children. We strive towards this by offering our members a wide variety of research-based professional development opportunities, networking, and other support to grow readers in Colorado and beyond.

Our work is grounded in evidence-based practices such as those put forth by Every Child Ready to Read®: empowering parents and caregivers attending library programs to foster their child's development of a variety of skills, including: background knowledge; concepts of print; letter knowledge; oral language/narrative skills; phonological awareness; print motivation; and vocabulary. This library-specific initiative, established by the Public Library Association and Association for Library Services to Children, is based on many of the same principles and research as the Science of Reading. Every Child Ready to Read® and other research-based early literacy programs are commonly implemented throughout Colorado public libraries, largely rendering the intent of this bill superfluous.

Furthermore, the requirements of the bill are not practical or feasible given the way Colorado public libraries operate and are governed. As written, this bill would require many public library staff to assume inappropriate roles. For example:

- The bill requires "each person employed as a librarian in a public library to successfully complete evidenced-based training in the science of reading," regardless of specialty. Not all librarians in a public library work with youth, nor are all the library staff that primarily work with children titled "librarians."
- If the bill is referring to the director employed by the board of trustees pursuant to Section 24-90-109(1)(c), said director may or may not be a librarian by degree or training, and they may or may not have experience working with children and families.

The library director is typically not best-suited to “identify materials and activities for parents and children to improve literacy.”

- Similarly, if the bill is referring to the director of the public library board/library board president, most library board members are volunteers. While passionate, they are also not typically qualified to identify literacy enriching materials or activities.

Additionally, the lack of funding in this bill to complete the intended training, or provide activities and resources, impedes the library’s ability to provide services to the public. Public libraries carefully curate their collections and programming to meet their community’s unique needs and interests. By not funding coverage for staff absences due to training, or providing funding for any of the required materials or activities, the bill limits the public library’s ability to provide a wide range of materials and services for their community.

While public libraries are invaluable partners with schools on a child’s lifelong learning journey, library staff are not formal instructors. Public libraries support multiple forms of literacy and multiple paths to literacy. This legislation does not philosophically align with public library values, and we are wary of a measure that would establish the precedent of allowing a state legislative body to mandate the materials public libraries must purchase or the programming they must provide.

We believe that including public libraries in this bill imposes an unnecessary, unfunded, and cumbersome burden. Therefore, we request that public libraries and librarians be removed from this bill, or that the bill undergoes significant revision.

Signed,
The Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy Steering Committee
February 8, 2022