



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 · MADISON, WI 53708

Nov. 5, 2021

The Honorable Gov. Tony Evers
Wisconsin State Capitol, Room 115 East
2 E. Main St.
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Gov. Evers,

It is no secret that we are facing a crisis right now in Wisconsin as it pertains to reading proficiency among our state's students.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, close to 65 percent of fourth graders in Wisconsin are not proficient readers, with 34 percent failing to meet basic standards.

Of the 42 states that report separate reading scores for African American students, Wisconsin ranks dead last in reading achievement, falling 31 places since 1992. During that same time frame, reading achievement for white students has dropped from 6th to 27th and Hispanic students from 1st to 28th.

It shouldn't matter whether you are a Republican or a Democrat – what this means for the future of our state should scare every single one of us.

Research has shown that children who cannot read at grade level in fourth grade will struggle to graduate from high school and are far less likely to lead productive lives. About 85 percent of juvenile offenders are functionally illiterate, as are 70 percent of prison inmates. More than 75 percent of those on welfare have difficulties in reading the simplest texts.

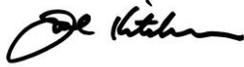
While these are disturbing and sobering statistics, the COVID-19 pandemic is making our situation even worse.

As such, we are respectfully urging you to sign into law our Roadmap to Reading Success legislation. We readily acknowledge that our bill is not a magic bullet that will solve all of our problems, but it is a great first step that will make a noticeable difference. The status quo is obviously not working and we have to do something different. We owe our students and parents that much.

As you are undoubtedly aware, AB 446 was passed by the Assembly with a bipartisan vote. It is also supported by such groups as the Wisconsin Reading Coalition, Decoding Dyslexia, Literacy Task Force of Northern Wisconsin and Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce.

There are many school districts in our state that are already utilizing the practices outlined in AB 446 and the results have been overwhelmingly positive. It is well past time that the other school districts in Wisconsin are given the same tools so we can help all our students learn to read proficiently. That will benefit our entire state as a whole.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Joel Kitchens in black ink.

Rep. Joel Kitchens
1st Assembly District

Handwritten signature of Jeremy Thiesfeldt in black ink.

Rep. Jeremy Thiesfeldt
52nd Assembly District