



WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Deb Andraca

23RD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

BAYSIDE FOX POINT GRAFTON MEQUON THIENSVILLE WHITEFISH BAY

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Representative Andraca's Floor Speech in Opposition to AB 446 Reading Readiness Legislation is an Unfunded Mandate

MADISON, WI -- During the October 26th, 2021 floor session, Representative Deb Andraca (D-Whitefish Bay) delivered the following remarks on AB 446, relating to reading readiness assessments.

"Today's Milwaukee Journal Sentinel headline does a great job of summarizing what this bill really does:

'Wisconsin legislation would triple number of literacy tests for young students in effort to identify at-risk readers'

We all know the saying "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Well, we all know that something is broken in our public schools. Not enough kids are learning to read. But what this bill says is "if you know it's broke, don't fix it. Test it again and again and again to make sure you know it's broke."

How does that fix the problem?

Before I ran for State Assembly I was a substitute elementary school teacher at my local public school. One of the jobs I did the most in the beginning of the year was subbing in the classroom while the teacher did individual benchmarking tests on each student. With 25 to 28 students in each classroom the process would take a few days, and I would rotate from class to class, giving each teacher the chance to work with students one-on-one.

This bill would TRIPLE the number of reading tests, and therefore the number of days that the classroom teacher is unavailable to teach your child.

And that's the best case scenario.

When I was doing my student teaching at a public school on Milwaukee's South Side, we didn't have the luxury of a substitute teacher during student testing. Each classroom teacher was expected to individually



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test 28 third graders while simultaneously managing all the other students. The process took weeks because we ended up having to pull students from lunch, recess and specials in order to get enough quality, one-on-one time to thoughtfully assess each student.

The goal of this bill is a good one. Identifying and diagnosing students before third grade with reading challenges, such as dyslexia, is critical to ensure they get the help they need by third grade. But what good is data if you are not able to use it?

An experienced second-grade teacher spoke to me about this proposal. She told me she has piles of testing data on her students. What she needs is the time for a thorough diagnosis and the assistance to execute and analyze the individual plans for 28 students.

What our students need most are more reading specialists who can implement targeted learning plans, or who have experience with dyslexia and visual processing disorders. More classroom aides who can work with small groups of students while the classroom teacher works with others.

But this bill has none of that. This bill triples the amount of testing and gives classroom teachers nothing but an unfunded mandate. Some of my colleagues believe that the ARPA funding going to schools can cover this proposal, but those funds are NOT going evenly to every school. Meanwhile this mandate applies to all schools equally.

*I know that many of you will vote for this bill and pat yourselves on the back thinking you have helped students learn to read. But your unwillingness to provide **every** school the resources to execute these plans shows either a complete lack of understanding of the workings of real-world, day-to-day classroom operations or a cynical attempt to score political points at the expense of actually investing in improving our students' reading scores.*

Our state is sitting on the biggest budget surplus in recent history, so it's not a matter of "can we do this." We can, and we must. When you know something is broken, something as important as making sure every kid can read by the end of third grade, what good are a stack of test scores saying yup, something is broken, without also providing the means to help fix it?

We can do better. The vote is no."

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