



---

**Testimony of Sandra Donnay, Ph.D.**

**President | The Racial Equity Initiative**

In Support of H.B. No. 6620: ‘An Act Concerning The Right To Read And Addressing Opportunity Gaps And Equity In Public Schools.’

Before the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

Public Hearing | March 17, 2021

Co-Chairs McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, Vice-Chairs Daugherty Abrams and Barry, and members of the Education Committee, my name is Sandra Donnay, writing on behalf of *The Racial Equity Initiative*, a Think Tank devoted to dismantling global racism.

I want to express my strong support for H.B. No. 6620: ‘An Act Concerning The Right To Read And Addressing Opportunity Gaps And Equity In Public Schools,’ and urge you to vote in favor of this important legislation.

As a developmental psychologist I am keenly aware of the importance of appropriate and enriched early childhood brain stimulation as a foundation for long term learning. Importantly, the research shows us that Black and poor children are more likely to start school at significant literacy deficits. Because of this improper early literacy foundation, Black and poor children may display lowered academic attainment that persists through the middle and high school years and that are associated with a range of adverse academic, economic, and social outcomes later in life.

The failure of our public schools to intervene to improve the early literacy skills of Black and poor children can be a key factor in maintaining racial disparities. This legislation is important to me because I believe every student has the Right to Read, and there’s a right way to teach them.

Therefore, I strongly support The Right to Read Act H.B. No. 6620.

---