

# IRG Action Fund: Literacy reform public hearing held in Madison, IRG Action delivers testimony

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Today, IRG Action Fund delivered written testimony for informational purposes on [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 321](#) to the Assembly Committee on State Affairs. The Committee is holding a [public hearing](#) on the bill this afternoon and may vote on it yet this week. A similar hearing is planned for the state Senate Committee on Education on [Senate Bill \(SB\) 329](#), the identical Senate version of AB 321, in the near future.

[Here is the testimony](#) delivered today from Chris Reader, IRG Action Fund Executive Vice President, and Quinton Klabor, IRG Senior Research Director.

## **EXCERPTS FROM THE TESTIMONY**

“Improving literacy outcomes for Wisconsin’s kids is one of the most critical reforms policymakers will consider this session.”

“In 2013, Mississippi had the [highest](#) poverty rate in America and a [rock-bottom](#) education system. Then, they passed [legislation](#) that fixed every part of the pipeline without any leaks... They now outperform us in every one of those categories.”

“Reading reform is the right way forward from our educational struggles and we thank you for your attention to this important matter.”

## **WHAT IT IS**

AB 321/SB 329 aims to transform literacy for Wisconsin’s students. In 2013, Mississippi schools were a [national embarrassment](#). Then, policymakers there

enacted reforms that raised Mississippi to a top-ranked reading state for students of all backgrounds by 2022. Earlier this month, IRG Action Fund released [Ranking the Options: Nine Ways to Improve Literacy in Wisconsin](#), which summarized what Mississippi and other leading states did. AB 321 includes versions of these reforms, addressing each part of the reading pipeline. However, IRG Action noted forthcoming amendments that could preserve full educational freedom in charter and voucher schools while still helping children read better.

## **WHY IT MATTERS**

For too long, Wisconsin's children have been [falling behind](#) the rest of the nation. About 20 years ago, Wisconsin's reading scores ranked near the top nationally. Today, Wisconsin's scores are [mediocre](#) at best and [rock-bottom](#) for our neediest children. That affects our ability to keep families and businesses in our great state. As students across the state ease into summer break, we hope that we can put Wisconsin on track for success by next school year with a bill that works for everybody using proven reforms from other states.

## **WHAT'S NEXT**

AB 321 is expected to move quickly as part of the overall budget negotiations in the second half of June. Amendments are expected this week, addressing concerns raised by IRG Action with sections of the bill. IRG Action will analyze those amendments and continue working with the authors to ensure that the final legislation will improve literacy in Wisconsin while valuing educational freedom.