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Rep. Rodriguez: Praises passage of the Right to Read Act

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MADISON – Rep. Jessie Rodriguez (R-Oak Creek) praises the bipartisan passage of Assembly Bill 321 (AB 321), a bill authored by Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) that will reform the teaching of reading in the state of Wisconsin.

“I have been deeply concerned about reading proficiency in our state for several years now, dating back to my time serving on the Assembly Committee on Education,” began Rep. Rodriguez.

64% of fourth-graders are not proficient at reading. Nationally, Wisconsin has fallen from sixth in the nation in reading achievement to 28th. The statistics are even worse for students of color, with Wisconsin ranking dead last in reading achievement among black students.

“We are failing our kids. Ensuring kids learn to read by the end of third grade is critical to their future success. From Kindergarten to Third Grade, our kids learn to read, so that in the following years of their education they can read to learn,” stated Rodriguez. “We have to do better at getting students reading at grade level by the end of third grade.”

AB 321 makes a number of literacy reforms:

· Screening schoolchildren on their reading abilities earlier and more often.

· Notifying parents if there are concerns with their child’s reading level, and creating a clear plan to get the child back on track for success.

· Keeping those students on their specialized plan until they are caught up to grade level and their parents sign-off that their child is no longer in need of

additional services.

· Providing professional development to retrain our teachers in the Science of Reading, which emphasizes the importance of phonics and science-based early reading instruction.

· Sharing half the cost of curriculum with any school district that chooses to purchase a new curriculum from a list of approved programs.

· Covering half the cost of 64 reading coaches that will visit struggling schools.

“In the education budget we passed in the Joint Finance Committee last week, we set aside $50 million for the reforms in this bill,” said Rep. Rodriguez. “These literacy initiatives will help our students become proficient in reading, and our state is making a substantial investment to bring the initiatives to fruition.”

AB 321 will now go to the State Senate for consideration. “My colleague, Representative Joel Kitchens, collaborated with the Department of Public Instruction on this bill, so I am optimistic that Governor Evers will sign these reforms when they reach his desk in the future,” concluded Rodriguez.