

July 21, 2020

The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
Assembly Education Committee
1020 N Street, Room 159
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 614 (Rubio): Teacher credentialing: reading instruction
Position: Support

Dear Assembly member Patrick O'Donnell:

On behalf of the California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO), which represents over 24,000 school business leaders in K-14 education, we write to express our strong support Senate Bill 614. As amended, SB 614 will replace the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) requirement for prospective teachers, and instead direct the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to ensure that all approved teacher preparation programs instruct and reliably assess candidates, by July 1, 2021. Finally, SB 614 requires the requirements for the issuance of the preliminary multiple subject, single subject or educational specialist credential to include either the approved preparation program requirements or the specified reading instruction assessment.

This change will align the state's current adopted curriculum framework with standards for teacher candidates and embed science-based foundational reading skills within program coursework and reliable program assessments. This change will guarantee that all teachers, in all specialties and subject areas gain this knowledge and can effectively teach students to read.

Adopted in 1996 and never updated, RICA is no longer aligned with current standards for teaching reading and literacy. Further, the exam remains culturally unresponsive to new themes in reading instruction, such as modifications for English learners and students with disabilities. Over its 24 year tenure, RICA has not been shown to predict effectiveness in the classroom. In 1994, pre-RICA, 88% of states had significantly higher reading scores than California according to National Assessment of Educational Progress data. In 2007, 10 years after RICA was implemented, 87% of states still outperformed California in reading.

California is currently experiencing a severe teacher shortage. In a recent survey conducted by the Learning Policy Institute, 80% of school districts reported having a teacher shortage. There has been a 70% drop in enrollment in teacher preparation programs over the last decade. There are several factors that contribute to this shortage, including low pay, and the onerous hurdles that prospective teachers face in order to earn a teaching credential.

It is time to replace the RICA for candidates pursuing a teaching credential. The RICA is an outdated assessment, not aligned with the current reading and literacy standards, that acts like a barrier to new teachers entering the profession.

For these reasons, we strongly **support** SB 614. Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Bachez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sara Bachez
Chief Governmental Relations Officer
California Association of School Business Officials