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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NEW LEGISLATION AIMS TO CLOSE CALIFORNIA'S EARLY LITERACY READING GAP**

*Assemblywoman Rubio's early legislation bill calls for an evidence-based approach to teaching children how to read*

**Sacramento, CA (February 7, 2024)** – Only three in 10 third-grade students from low-income communities can read at grade level compared to six in 10 of their higher-income peers, according to a [policy brief](#) co-authored by the California Early Literacy Coalition. Today, Assemblywoman Blanca Rubio (D-Baldwin Park) introduced a new early literacy bill, AB 2222, to ensure a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to teaching all of California's elementary school students how to read and addressing the deep inequities around reading achievement for California's most vulnerable students. The bill has bipartisan support from 13 co-authors and is sponsored by [EdVoice](#), [Decoding Dyslexia CA](#) and [Families In Schools](#). Details may be found in the [AB 2222 legislative policy brief](#).

“If there is one primary responsibility of public elementary schools, it is to teach children to read so they may have futures filled with opportunity. We now know how to best teach children to read because of interdisciplinary research known as the science of reading. It's time we require this evidence-based approach to early literacy instruction in every California classroom. We are grateful to Assemblymember Rubio for championing a child's right to read,” said Marshall Tuck, EdVoice CEO.

The bill will require updates to state-adopted English language arts, English language development, and reading instructional materials. In addition, the bill calls for professional development for elementary educators in evidence-based literacy instruction that adheres to the science of reading. The bill will also improve accountability in teacher preparation programs related to new literacy teaching standards and provide support for professional development for teacher preparation faculty. Adhering to the science of reading means following evidence from a large body of interdisciplinary research that guides effective classroom practices benefitting all students, including English learners. Evidence-based practices include systematic and explicit instruction focused on phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, oral language development, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.

“As an educator, I have firsthand knowledge of the struggles instructors face to ensure their students know how to read. California teachers work tirelessly to better the success of each student. However, California is failing its students, especially diverse students from low-income families. California must address this social inequity by following decades of interdisciplinary research showing what it takes for students to develop strong literacy skills. AB 2222 will set up both our students and our educators for success by equipping them with evidence-based resources,” said Assemblywoman Rubio.

By third grade, students move from learning to read to reading to learn, and those who are not on grade level rarely catch up on their academic journey. This is a major contributing factor to the [28% adult illiteracy rate](#) in our state, one of the highest in the nation. [Research shows](#) that adults with limited literacy are more likely to be unemployed or earn an income that falls below the poverty level.

“This is not just an education issue, it's a social justice issue. Early learning gaps all too often turn into lifelong opportunity gaps. The path to ending adult illiteracy and ensuring opportunity for all starts with access to effective early literacy instruction. We call on our elected leaders to take immediate action on comprehensive early literacy legislation given the urgency of this crisis,” said Megan Potente, Co-State Director of Decoding Dyslexia CA.

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According to the [World Literacy Foundation](#), illiteracy can also lead to poor health conditions, disenfranchisement, and even crime. Among youth involved in the juvenile justice system, up to 85% are functionally illiterate.

“Every parent wants their child to read – they know that literacy unlocks their potential. Parents are counting on us to address this literacy crisis so that their children can reach their hopes and dreams,” said Yolie Flores, Families In Schools President & CEO.

AB 2222 is headed to the Assembly Education Committee this spring. Supporters have an opportunity to make their voice heard by signing this [petition](#).

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EdVoice is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization that, since 2000, has advocated to reshape public education in California by directly influencing state policy so that students from low-income communities have futures filled with opportunity.