

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Jan. 31, 2023

Michigan Education Justice Coalition Urges Lawmakers to Scrap 3rd Grade Retention Law

LANSING, Mich. – Members of the Michigan Education Justice Coalition (MEJC) will attend the Michigan State Senate Education Committee today to urge passage of [Senate Bill 12](#), sponsored by Sen. Dayna Polehanki. The bill aims to reform Michigan’s third grade reading law by removing a mandate that schools retain students who are a grade level or more behind in reading based on standardized test scores.

Research from the [Education Policy Innovation Collaborative at Michigan State University](#) found that Black and students from low income families are more likely to be required to repeat third grade over their white peers. The report shows that 13.6% of the Black students whose reading scores were flagged were held back compared to 5.7% of white students who were behind in their reading scores.

William Weir is a retired Detroit middle school teacher and member of 482 Forward, which is part of the MEJC, and is testifying this afternoon:

“The current law is one of the most inequitable education policies we have in place right now. Educators know that helping students catch up on reading skills by third grade is critical to their development, but the one-size fits all solution doesn’t take students’ specific learning needs into account. And the fact that this law is being applied disproportionately to Black and low-income students should be an immediate red flag showing that it needs reform,” said Weir.

Joanne Galloway is an MEJC member and executive director of the St. Ignace-based advocacy organization [Center for Change Northern Michigan Advocacy](#) and also plans to testify at today’s hearing:

“If retaining a child in 3rd grade actually worked in terms of fixing our statewide literacy challenges, schools would already be doing this but the reality is holding a kid back doesn’t actually solve the underlying issues for why they are struggling. Instead, research shows that individualized interventions are far more effective at helping students catch up on their learning needs,” said Galloway. “Rather than holding students back a grade, we need funding to provide things like learning interventions and smaller class sizes to ensure students can get the extra attention when they need it.”

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The Michigan Education Justice Coalition is a statewide network committed to advocating for equitable public education policies and funding to create safe and healthy learning environments. Learn more at www.michiganedjustice.org.