Strategies for Children Applauds House Passage of Third Grade Reading Proficiency Bill

July 11, 2012 – Strategies for Children applauded today's unanimous House passage of H. 4243, An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency. The bill addresses a benchmark that strongly predicts children’s chances of academic success and will help ensure that children are proficient readers by the end of third grade. It is supported by more than 50 leading education and advocacy organizations and co-sponsored by nearly 60 legislators.

"We applaud the House of Representatives for today’s passage of An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency,” said Amy O’Leary, director of Early Education for All, a campaign of Strategies for Children. “Almost 40% of third graders in Massachusetts read below grade level, and too many of them will have trouble catching up. Research indicates that 74% of children who read poorly in third grade will continue to struggle in school. This bill makes children’s development as young readers a state priority and helps ensure that state policies and resources are aligned to meet this goal.”

"We thank Speaker DeLeo, co-sponsor Speaker Pro Tempore Haddad, Ways and Means Chairman Dempsey, Ways and Means Committee Vice Chair Marty Walz for her tireless efforts as lead sponsor, and Education Committee Chair Alice Peisch for her leadership," O’Leary said.

In arguing for the bill’s passage, Representative Walz, the bill’s lead House sponsor, said, "Let me emphasize that despite the hundreds of millions of dollars we have invested in public education, the percentage of students who are reading proficiently in the third grade is all but unchanged in 10 years. We should not ignore the problem or keep it hidden in what appear to be encouraging achievements. To do right by our children, we should shine a spotlight on this and commit to change."

Representative Peisch, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Education, said, “Now is the time to take this important step forward to ensure all children in Massachusetts can read proficiently by the end of third grade, particularly those who are the most vulnerable.”

An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency would establish an Early Literacy Expert Panel to advise state education agencies on the alignment, coordination and implementation — from early education and care through the primary grades — of language-rich curriculum, effective instructional practices, professional development and training, developmentally appropriate assessment, and family partnership. It would advise on the refinement and implementation of existing state plans for early literacy development.

Strategies for Children and its Early Education for All Campaign work to ensure that children in Massachusetts have access to high-quality early education and become proficient readers by the end of third grade. Read our blog, Eye on Early Education. Find us on Facebook. Follow us on Twitter. View us on YouTube.