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

July 26, 2012 – Strategies for Children applauded today's Senate passage of H.4243, An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency. The House of Representatives unanimously approved the measure on July 11. The bill, which addresses a critical educational benchmark that strongly predicts children’s chances of academic success, is supported by more than 50 leading education and advocacy organizations and was co-sponsored by nearly 60 legislators.

"We applaud the Massachusetts Senate for its approval 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. "Leading the nation in education is not good enough when 39% of the commonwealth’s third graders read below grade level, according to the latest MCAS. It is not good enough when 60% of children from low-income families are not proficient readers. Research indicates that 74% of children who struggle with reading in third grade will continue to struggle throughout school and are four times less likely than their peers to finish high school by age 19. 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 Senate President Therese Murray; Senator Katherine Clark, the bill's lead Senate sponsor; and Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Education, for their leadership on this critical legislation."

"An investment in early literacy is critical for our children and our economic health," Senator Clark said during the chamber’s debate on the bill. “There are no easy answers to this complex problem, but…. by focusing on early literacy, we can make significant strides in improving education statewide.”

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.