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COMMITTEES:

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SCR 4019 Testimony House Education Committee March 16, 2025

Chair Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

SCR 4019 was introduced to provide the legislature with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of what's working and not working when it comes to reading and mathematics proficiency rates among students with disabilities in our state. This would be done in partnership with the Department of Public Instruction, educators, parents, students and stakeholders who would like to see proficiency rates increase for students with disabilities.

50 years ago, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was enacted by Congress. With its reauthorization in 1990, it became known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and has been the foundation of Federal financial support for students with disabilities. With the President's recent Executive Order expanding educational freedom for families, we may see significant changes in how IDEA funding is disseminated. This is why I believe the study is important for Legislative Management to consider, but also very timely.

It has been my experience that parents of students with disabilities tend to be highly engaged in their students' education. So, a study like this would allow them to share their experiences of success stories and challenges for us to learn about best practices and potentially provide policy and funding recommendations to the next legislative assembly. Furthermore, I am aware of at least one cohort of special education teachers who meet virtually on a regular basis to share resources and develop strategies to improve outcomes for their students. Teachers like this who are engaging each other, on their own time, to improve the delivery of education for their students with disabilities are exactly the stakeholders we should hear from.

I also know that for every engaged parent, there is likely a handful of less engaged parents who aren't as involved in their child's education. This is often due to work scheduling, lack of advocacy and negotiating skills or unfamiliarity with the rights and responsibilities they have as a parent in our education system. I am confident that a study like what is proposed in 4019 would provide us insight into how to better engage and empower those parents to be stronger partners with their child's educator to improve educational outcomes.

I hope you'll provide SCR 4019 your support and I'm happy to stand for any questions or comments you may have.