

Senate Education Committee Meeting

**Official Minutes
151st General Assembly
First Session**

**Committee Meeting
Tuesday, May 11, 2021
11:00 a.m.
Virtual Zoom Meeting**

Meeting Attendance

Committee Members:

Present:

Senator Laura Sturgeon	Laura.Sturgeon@delaware.gov	302-744-4135
Senator Elizabeth Lockman	Elizabeth.Lockman@delaware.gov	302-744-4168
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Senator Bryan Townsend	Bryan.Townsend@delaware.gov	302-744-4165
Senator Ernesto Lopez	Ernesto.Lopez@delaware.gov	302-744-4136

Staff:

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Abigail Armstrong	Abigail.Armstrong@delaware.gov	

Attendees:

Representative Kim Williams
Secretary Susan Bunting
Senator John Walsh
Senator Kyle Gay
Aimee String
Angie Alfano
Audrey Noble
Bailey Brooks
Barbara Kanter
Caroline O'Neal
Carrie Antonelli

Organization:

House of Representatives

Delaware State Senate
Delaware State Senate
DeIDOT

Delaware State Board of Education

Former Reading Specialist and Special Ed. teacher
Reading Assist

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Agenda:

HB 120
 HB 133
 SB 125
 SB 133

Senator Sturgeon convened the meeting at 11:05 a.m. and conducted a roll call.

Senator Sokola motioned to accept the previous meeting's minutes of April 28, 2021, and **Senator Bonini** seconded the motion.

The Committee approved the meeting's minutes of April 28, 2021.

I. HB 120 – Rep. Williams – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE RED CLAY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT BUS SAFETY CAMERA PILOT PROGRAM.

Synopsis: This Act makes changes to House Bill 202 from the 150th General Assembly creating a pilot program for the Red Clay School District to use external camera systems on their school buses to catch motorists that fail to stop when a school bus is stopped and displaying flashing lamps to take on or discharge school children and assess a civil penalty as punishment. The changes in this bill are necessary to make clear that the Act,

which mirrors 21 Del. C. § 4101(d), the State's Electronic Red Light Safety Program, only creates a civil, not a criminal penalty.

Representative Williams, the Prime Sponsor of the legislation, provided a synopsis. Last year, HB 202 was signed into law which created a pilot program for the Red Clay Consolidated School District (Red Clay) to utilize external counter systems on school buses. This would catch motorists that illegally pass school buses and punish motorists by issuing them a penalty. This is a nationwide and local issue. When Representative Williams circulated HB 120 for sponsorship, she shared a video of vehicles ignoring a stopped Red Clay school bus which had flashing lights and the safety arm extended. It is disheartening to see Delaware citizens ignoring the law and endangering children's lives. When drafting this legislation, Representative Williams worked with Red Clay, the Department of Justice, and the Delaware Criminal Justice Information System. The changes in this bill clarify that the act of illegally passing a stopped school bus, exemplified in Delaware's electronic red-light safety program, does not create a criminal penalty, rather a civil one. Red Clay created their public service announcement, *Don't Rush to the Red*, which was nominated for a 2020 Emmy Award. In a Maryland county, they reported that 51,000 tickets were issued to drivers caught on camera illegally passing a stopped school bus over two years. According to a survey by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services in 2018 over 108,000 school bus drivers observed almost 84,000 vehicles illegally passing school buses in a single day. The original bill was named after Laura, a Red Clay student from McKean High School who was getting on the bus when a vehicle hit it. Also, Dr. Ted Ammann is present to answer any additional questions that the Committee members may have.

Senator Sturgeon acknowledge Secretary Susan Bunting and recognized Senator Sokola.

Senator Sokola is a sponsor of the legislation. Senator Sokola noticed something in the bill that he did not notice during the initial bill circulation. The bill limits appeals to those over \$500. Senator Sokola is concerned about this restriction because a motorcyclist has the same license plate as his wife's car. This individual ran through an E-Z-Pass. Senator Sokola and his wife were able to appeal the ticket, but it was not more than \$500. Is there an administrative way to address that? It is somewhat nuanced, but these issues do occur. Some people fraudulently replicates a license plate or kids may be driving their parent's cars. Sometimes you are fining the wrong person. Does anyone have a response to the potential problem regarding the appeal mechanism?

Ted Ammann, Assistant Superintendent for Red Clay School District, explained they had some conversations with the Justice of the Peace (JP) Court after the initial bill was signed last year. People still have the opportunity to go to the JP Court and share why they believe it is not a valid penalty. This process would still ensure the fine would work its way through the Court. The \$500 limit refers to the appeal process after the JP Court hearing. In the example provided by Senator Sokola, the person would receive a notice

of the hearing and be allowed to go to the JP Court and present the information on the fraudulent plate.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Bonini.

Senator Bonini asked how many tickets were issued in the pilot program, how much money did that generate, and where did that money go?

Ted Ammann answered there have been no penalties assessed since the program has been piloting based on the changes recommended by the JP Court and the Department of Justice. Red Clay has 40 buses equipped with cameras. In the first 58 days of school, the cameras captured 186 infractions, which averaged 3 per day. There has not been any funding associated at this point because it is still piloting. If the bill passed, the program would start penalizing. The bill requires any funds raised by the program would go toward the safety of school buses.

Senator Bonini asked if the pilot was conducted during the COVID pandemic does that provide a fair assessment on whether this program should proceed.

Ted Ammann explained that even before the initial bill was passed last year, Red Clay has used cameras for the past three years. The infraction rates recorded for this school year are similar to the previous traditional school years. Also, the data mirrors the Department of Education data from their annual report on school bus drivers.

Senator Bonini asked if Red Clay had an estimate of the fines.

Ted Ammann shared that the initial fine is \$100 and increases for multiple violations. Representative Williams believes there may be an accident for first-time violations but less of an excuse the second or third time.

Senator Bonini asked if this program is implemented through the voluntary assessment centers and is enforced by a police agency.

Ted Ammann the bill does not require the program to be enforced by a police agency. Before circulating the initial bill, Representative Williams and Dr. Ted Ammann discussed with the state police and the Department of Justice. They believed the pilot program should be completed by Red Clay and following the pilot, there would be further discussion on whether the program would be taken over at the state level. At this point, the notices would be generated through the vendor at Red Clay and provided to the JP Court.

Senator Bonini asked if someone was to pass a stopped school bus, they would receive a letter for the Red Clay School District.

Ted Ammann stated that is correct. The letter would be similar to a red light camera infraction letter which explains where and when the infraction occurred and a still picture of the incident with a link to a full-motion video. That evidence package would be shared with JP Court.

Senator Bonini stated that red light camera infractions can mail in proof for an appeal. What this bill suggests is people will have to go to JP Court to appeal the fine.

Ted Ammann stated yes, that is his understanding from discussions with the JP Court. The Court will schedule all the infractions on a set date so they will all be dealt with at the same time.

Senator Bonini was confused about the \$500 limit. If someone has to attend the JP Court for a \$100 or a later offense of \$500 fine, what does the appeal refer to?

Ted Ammann stated if the fine is under \$500, they would still attend JP Court, but if the judge finds them guilty they would not be able to appeal it. However, after a second offense and the fine reached the \$500 threshold, motorists can appeal the court session.

Senator Bonini asked if Red Clay has a vendor.

Ted Ammann stated yes.

Senator Bonini asked what percentage of the fine does the vendor receive.

Ted Ammann stated because the program is still a pilot, the term of the process is the vendor would receive \$15 out of the \$100 citation. Following the pilot, Red Clay would competitively bid this to inquire on other vendors who would have a more advantageous rate. The \$15 covers the DMV work of tracking motorists, mailing, and collecting the fines.

Senator Bonini asked if the vendor installs the hardware on all the buses as well.

Ted Ammann stated yes, it is a part of the standards camera system that most school districts have. The brains of the system are already on the bus and the cameras are an addition to the stop arms if the districts wish to do so. The cameras also hold other purposes, for example, a truck hit a bus and that information is helpful to provide to the state police to be able to cite drivers appropriately.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Sokola.

Senator Sokola noted he witnessed an incident last week. On his way to the Lantana area on valley road, there was a school bus approaching from the other direction which

stopped and had its lights on. There was a stopped car in front of the school bus and the person dropped off a child. The car then U-turned and drove right past the bus while the kids were waiting. Red Clay does a great job of reminding people what the rules are, but some people need further reminding. It was egregious what the car did. They were in too large of a hurry to wait for the school bus.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Bonini.

Senator Bonini asked if an individual is unable to pay the fine, is there a payment schedule through the JP Court.

Representative Williams did not know and stated she would provide that information to Senator Bonini at a later time.

Senator Bonini noted that in some cases when an individual is unable to pay these fines it can lead to real legal trouble later in time. We try to avoid that as much as possible. Senator Bonini does not believe this program should be run through a school district. Red Clay is incredibly taxed enough and provides support to our children. This is a real problem and a symptom of distracted driving. Within the modern context, distracted driving is a huge issue. School districts should not be in the business of fining people. Senator Bonini feels this program should run through a law enforcement agency. Senator Bonini believes Red Clay intends to increase safety. In a previous year, the bond bill passed legislation that curbed abuses of red light cameras in Wilmington and other places. Over time this issue evolved into a revenue stream. Senator Bonini does not believe Red Clay will do this but is always concerned when new revenue streams are created outside of law enforcement.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Representative Williams.

Representative Williams is aware of and understands Senator Bonini's concerns. She appreciates his comments. The original plan for the bill was to create a statewide program, but everyone agreed it was better to start small to work out all the issues. Once Red Clay has fully implemented this program, they will report out to determine whether to expand into other agencies. As Dr. Ted Ammann mentioned, Red Clay does not want to profit from this program, rather they would prefer there were no violations. The Department of Transportation and Delaware state police recommended the program starts with Red Clay.

Senator Bonini recognized Senator Walsh.

Senator Walsh commended Representative Williams for her work. This is an issue for all school districts. Specifically in Red Clay, in 67 days 267 violations were recorded. We do not want to see anyone hurt and would prefer if there were no violations. All the advocates believed Red Clay would be the best school district to run this pilot program.

Senator Sturgeon opened to public comment and recognized Dr. Tammy Croce.

Tammy Croce, Executive Director for the Delaware Association of School Administrators, supports the bill and appreciates the collaboration with the Sponsor.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Dr. John Marinuchi.

John Marinucci, Executive Director of the Delaware School Boards Association, supports the legislation to improve the pilot and allow it to move forward. School buses are the safest form of transportation and the main danger is when students are embarking or disembarking the bus. That is when most students are either injured or killed. This bill addresses the problem of cars passing buses at a critical point when students are embarking and disembarking.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Laird Stabler.

Laird Stabler, Delaware School Bus Contractors Association, thanked the sponsors for bringing the bill forward. The Association supports the legislation. They believe it is necessary and look forward to having a pilot program and eventually implemented statewide. School bus drivers echo the magnitude of this issue.

HB 120 – Reported out of the Committee – 3 (Sturgeon, Lockman, Sokola) = Favorable 2 (Bonini, Lopez) = on its Merits 0 = Unfavorable

II. HB 133 – Rep. Williams – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO EDUCATOR EVALUATIONS.

Synopsis: This Act changes the current evaluation system for all teachers from the former Delaware Performance Appraisal System II evaluation to a new Delaware Teacher Growth and Support System. The goal of this new evaluation system is to build a culture of professionalism and learning within every school by converting the evaluation system from a teacher-focused to a learning-focused system. It also increases accountability by requiring a beginning, middle, and end of the year review of both the teacher’s professional learning goals and student improvement goals. All teachers (not just 4-8 testing subjects) will be held accountable for student growth. The new evaluation system will only apply to teachers. Specialists and administrators will continue to be evaluated under the Delaware Performance Appraisal System II. Under this Act, the new evaluation system will be phased in with a minimum of 3 local education agencies participating in a pilot program for the academic year 2021-2022, which will sunset on June 30, 2022. Under Section 2 and 3 of this Act, the effective academic year 2022-2023, all teachers will fall under the Delaware Teacher Growth and Support System and all specialists and administrators will be evaluated under Delaware Performance Appraisal System II.

Representative Williams, the Prime Sponsor of the legislation, provided a synopsis. This legislation changes the Delaware Performance Appraisal System II evaluation to a new Delaware Teacher Growth and Support System. It builds a culture of professionalism and learning within every school by converting the evaluation system from a teacher-focused to a learning-focused system. The legislation allows for a pilot program for the academic year 2021-2022 with a full state implementation in the academic year 2022-2023. The current DPAS II system is misaligned from the current observation tool and the leading research. The new evaluation system will be comprised of no more than 5 learning areas, removes the required use of the previously known component 5 results from smarter balance. We will no longer use state assessments, which is a good thing. Feedback from the field regarding the misalignment of the classroom observation tool. In addition to the rubric evaluation, three areas of educator performance, each educator will receive a professional growth plan which will include both professional learning and student improvement goals. This legislation passed the House of Representatives with a vote of 41-0. This legislation is supported by the DSEA and the DOE.

Senator Sturgeon commented that she was evaluated using DPAS. The new plan is better and provides a coaching growth model. As someone who firsthand experienced the evaluation system, Senator Sturgeon is in full support of the legislation. Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Bonini.

Senator Bonini asked if students are still being tested if Delaware is no longer using Smarter Balance.

Representative Williams clarifying that students will still be tested, but the tests will no longer be associated with teacher evaluations.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Jon Neubauer.

Jon Neubauer reiterated the bill will make it that tests are no longer used to determine teacher evaluations. The evaluation system will still review a student improvement component and teachers can determine what variables are used to measure student growth.

Senator Sturgeon clarified that teachers will be evaluated on many measures including student improvement. The teachers will be able to design and work with their evaluator to determine what measure they will use to determine student improvement. This will be completed with their evaluation supervisor. This allows the evaluation to be more meaningful. Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Sokola.

Senator Sokola supports the legislation. He was never a fan of smarter balance, mainly because of the process used to get it. It was not the inclusive stakeholder engagement process used for the previous state assessment. It is a weakness we are still using

Smarter Balance because for years Senator Sokola has heard children have been tested too much. If we are not using Smarter Balance then there needs to be another assessment that is approved by the Department, which will take more days to administer. While this is a step in the right direction, we have to figure out ways to remove assessments that are not useful. They are expensive, time-consuming, and take away from the teacher's main job of teaching children.

Representative Williams thanked Senator Sokola.

Senator Sturgeon opened to public comment and recognized Dr. Tammy Croce.

Tammy Croce, Executive Director for the Delaware Association of School Administrators, supports this bill. They were a part of the development for teacher growth and support system. they appreciate the Department for including DASA in the drafting of the bill.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Dr. John Marinucci.

John Marinucci, Executive Director of the Delaware School Boards Association, supports this bill. They have been involved in the DPAS committee. They appreciate being involved.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Kristin Dwyer.

Kristin Dwyer, Delaware State Education Association, supports the bill. They were allowed to provide feedback on the bill. Additionally, the Department has included DSEA staff and local leaders in training for the pilot program and hope for its expansion statewide. The Department continues to do such a great job at including advocates as stakeholders and bringing that feedback to the table using it for bill development, policy development, and implementation. Kristin Dwyer thanked Secretary Susan Bunting for her leadership. The pilot programs worked with the union members, so this ensures the pilot programs are tuned in to what is occurring in the classroom and the current teaching standards.

HB 133 – Reported out of the Committee – 3 (Sturgeon, Lockman, Sokola) = Favorable 2 (Bonini, Lopez) = on its Merits 0= Unfavorable

III. SB 125– Sen. Gay – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Synopsis: This bill provides that the spouse and any child of a member of the active military service of the United States, who has been assigned to duty elsewhere immediately following assignment to duty in Delaware, shall be deemed to be an in-

state resident to determine the tuition, fees, and other charges at Delaware public universities, colleges, or community colleges as long as the spouse or child remains enrolled at such institution.

Senator Gay, the prime sponsor of the legislation, provided a synopsis. SB 125 would maintain the tuition promise of spouses and children of active-duty members, even if they are reassigned. This can make a big difference for military families that put down roots in Delaware and that have budgeted in-state tuition into their financial plans. Not only will save money for families regarding college, but will allow students to attend Delaware colleges, remain with friends and classmates, and continue their courses of study without interruption. This legislation is enacted in 21 other states. It is important to note, this is a substantial amount of money. The difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition can vary as much as threefold. Specifically for the University of Delaware, the difference between in-state and out-of-state can be double. This is important legislation for our military families and helps to create Delaware as a destination.

Senator Sturgeon requested to be a co-sponsor of the legislation and recognized Senator Sokola.

Senator Sokola had this issue arise when he completed the veteran bike ride with Blue Hens Veterans and Friends. It is a group that bikes to different locations associated with veterans. There are little nuanced things that veterans and their families must deal with and this is one of those issues. Notably, the synopsis states Delaware public universities, colleges, or community colleges and sometimes the University of Delaware does not believe they are public. We need to clarify that with them.

Senator Gay thanked Senator Sokola and mentioned the bill helps to find ways to be more accommodating. Senator Gay reached out to the public universities and they are enthusiastic. The legislation ensures that with any changes the tuition stays consistent. Also, anyone researching this issue can see this is how it should be handled. Oftentimes people do not know to ask for help.

Senator Sokola noted the University of Delaware had a position dedicated to working with veterans. Once that person left those duties were combined into other positions. The university should work to reestablish a position dedicated to working with those qualified students.

Senator Sturgeon asked whether Senator Gay has spoken with the University of Delaware or if the language presented ensures their cooperation.

Senator Gay stated yes, she worked with the Department of Education to ensure the language was properly placed in title 14. Senator Gay spoke with representatives from the University of Delaware, Delaware State University, and DelTech.

Senator Sturgeon noted she was less worried about Delaware State University and DelTech but concerned whether the University of Delaware views itself as a public institution.

Senator Gay noted the University of Delaware mentioned they work with students to ensure this accommodation is possible.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Bonini.

Senator Bonini requested to be a co-sponsor of the legislation.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Lockman.

Senator Lockman recognized the importance of the legislation and was impressed. Senator Lockman requested to be a co-sponsor.

There was no public comment.

SB 125– Reported out of the Committee – 3 (Sturgeon, Lockman, Sokola) = Favorable 2 (Bonini, Lopez) = on its Merits 0= Unfavorable

IV. SB 133– Sen. Sturgeon – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS.

Synopsis: The 2019 Delaware Literacy Plan (“Literacy Plan”) established a framework to address Delaware’s literacy challenges. The Literacy Plan concluded that a strong teacher preparation program should lay the foundation for teachers to be able to engage students in the essential components of evidence-based reading instruction, known as the “science of reading.” This Act incorporates the science of reading into Delaware’s public and charter schools by requiring, beginning July 1, 2023, that teacher preparation programs that prepare the elementary school, early childhood education, or special education teachers or reading specialists must provide instruction in evidence-based reading instruction. It requires the Department of Education to establish a minimum number of hours of training that instructors in educator preparation programs must complete in evidence-based reading instruction. This Act also makes technical corrections to conform existing law to the standards of the Delaware Legislative Drafting Manual.

Senator Sturgeon, the prime sponsor of the legislation, provided a synopsis of the legislation. This bill is about early literacy and giving children a strong foundation. Decades of research have shown there is a science on how to teach reading. There is established science that is agreed upon by the experts in academia. Reading is the key

to high school success and beyond. We want to ensure the science is being implemented in Delaware schools and teacher preparation programs. When Senator Sturgeon was a teacher, she saw students who did not have a strong foundation in reading which caused them to struggle in every subject. Our students deserve to have teachers who teach science. Delaware wants to attract the best and brightest, hold them to high standards because our students deserve nothing less. Teaching reading according to science can get all students reading on level by second grade at the latest. If we teach our students how to read the right way Delaware will be one step closer to educational equity, narrowing learning gaps between high and low-income students, students of privilege, and students at risk. Teaching reading the right way means to reteach and remediate. This means empowering children from all backgrounds and taking away a source of shame. Teaching reading the right way means fewer people in our prisons. The number of people incarcerated who are illiterate or way below their reading level is staggering. One can draw a direct line from reading skills to lack of opportunity to ending up in the criminal justice system. The science of reading and this legislation sets students up for success from the beginning. Now that we are addressing trauma as it relates to academic outcomes, Senator Sturgeon would like to add this piece to the puzzle. Good readers make good successful classroom citizens, good workers, and neighbors, and eventually good job creators. We hope to do more in the future. This bill started broader addressing veteran teachers, graduating teachers, and students in preparation programs. We have grand ideas that we are committed to. For this year, the bill is narrowed to address just the teacher preparation programs. This requires teacher preparation programs to teach reading based on the science of reading. This requires the programs to provide professional development to all professors and teachers so they know the science of reading. We will address in the future whether the higher education institutions taught the science of reading. This bill tackles the first part on ensuring students in teacher preparation programs are learning the science of reading. This will address those teaching in grades K-5 where most reading instruction occurs. The three target populations are teachers in grades L-5, special education teachers, and reading specialists. Senator Sturgeon recognized Kelly Butler.

Kelly Butler, Barksdale Reading Institute, provided comment and expertise on the subject of the science of reading. Kelly Butler is impressed with Delaware's work and is further than Mississippi by establishing requirements in the legislation. The Barksdale Reading Institute has been around since 2000. The Institute is working with teacher preparation programs and reteaching current teachers. Barksdale has worked in providing professional development and high-quality reading resources for teachers in K-3. Very early on, they determined funding faculty in the higher education institutions to help influence how they are preparing teachers to teach. The Institute was founded the same year the National Reading Panel Report codified the five components of reading. We were funding those faculty members to incorporate the science of reading early on. The truth is, the science has been around for more than 50 years and the primary reason it has been slow to gain traction is changing people's view of teaching

from philosophy-based to science-based. There have been teachers who have been successful with trial and error. While we do not want to diminish those hard efforts, but we want to recognize there is a science on how the brain processes language and there is a lot to learn from that on how to deliver instruction. The science of reading is clear in MRI scans and other research. What we know less about is the instruction of the science of reading. There is a great deal of research being completed to address that concern. While there is not extensive research on the instruction, we do know explicit and systematic instruction is evidence-based and required for the foundation of reading. In Mississippi, we have created a professional development evaluation. The Department of Education, Kellogg's, and Barksdale have collaborated to begin the second cohort of faculty training. This program has been slow because it is voluntary. We began with letters training then coaching on what delivery looks like. This program is attempting to close the gap between researchers and practitioners. The more we shrink that gap and advocate teaching as a science-based profession rather than a philosophy-based profession. Delaware has made a great first step.

Senator Sturgeon stated Delaware wanted to be specific in what elements are covered for the science of reading. Senator Sturgeon thanked Kelly Butler for her expertise. Other Senators expressed gratitude for Kelly Butler's time and information. Senator Sturgeon recognized Senator Lockman.

Senator Lockman thanked Kelly Butler and is excited for the direction the legislation takes the Delaware education system.

Kelly Butler added the more you can engage higher education institutions the better. Many great institutions are going great work and you should lift them.

Senator Sturgeon agreed and noted they have been in contact with faculty and Dean Gary Henry from the University of Delaware. They are committed to the science of reading. We have not heard any negative feedback from Delaware higher education institutions. Senator Sturgeon opened to public comment and recognized Caroline O'Neal.

Caroline O'Neal, Executive Director of Reading Assist, supports the legislation. Reading Assist has served Delaware for 30 years providing support for struggling readers and training teachers on the accredited, evidence-based, structured reading program that implements the science of reading. We currently run a high dosage tutoring program where we recruit AmeriCorps members known as reading assist fellows into high needs schools to provide one on one reading instruction. We work with students in the lowest 10% of reading proficiency, those students have made no progress in their regular reading instruction. These students do not know the difference between a letter and a number. Through Reading Assist, they get these students to grade-level benchmark or further. After a year of instruction, students look forward to reading. A parent shared that a student decorated her room with letters. This student started the year only

knowing five letters. Only 17% of low-income students in Delaware are reading proficiently by grade 4. We work with schools across the state. Each week the principal partners ask Reading Assist to help train their teachers. Teachers are struggling to deliver effective reading instruction. Principals have shared that teaching phonics and understanding its impact is the largest need in the state. Teachers need to have the resources and instruction on how to teach phonics.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Kathy Seeman.

Kathy Seeman, a Reading Specialist at the University of Delaware, supports the legislation. Kathy Seeman had a 100% success rate after implementing the science of reading. She learned about the science of reading from Reading Assist and then continued into a master's degree. About 50% of Delaware 3rd graders can not read proficiently. Approximately 1 in 6 Delaware adults is functionally illiterate. While 40% of students can learn despite the instruction they receive, 60% need systematic instruction following the science of reading. Arming teachers with the science of reading will benefit Delaware readers. When Kathy Seeman was an undergrad during the mid-90s the elementary program only included two reading classes, children's literature, and historical data about reading in America. She did not have one course that taught how to diagnose a reading disability or break down a reading journey. Many of her colleagues had a similar experience. This is a trend across the nation. The 2002 Presidential Commission on the Excellence of Special Education found that two-thirds of students were in special education because they were not taught to read effectively. The science of reading would arm teachers with the appropriate instruction on successful reading.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Marci Agnew.

Marci Agnew, a special education school teacher for Red Clay Consolidated School District, supports this legislation. Marci Agnew has researched the science of reading for the past year and has used personal funding. Additionally, she joined a Facebook page dedicated to the science of reading. This instruction has changed Marci Agnew's students and their ability to read. Marci Agnew's Master of Education program did not properly educate her on how to teach reading. She explained the importance of the Delaware education system teaching the reading of science.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Sarah Beth Theaker.

Sarah Beth Theaker supports the legislation. She is a Delawarean, literacy coach, certified dyslexia interventionist, and the President of the Decoding Dyslexia of Delaware. Her personal experience has impacted her passion for advocating for better reading instruction. Literacy is a constitutional right and can be ensured in Delaware by teaching reading the right way. The science of reading has taught Sarah Beth Theaker

how to be a proper literacy teacher. She explained that socioeconomic status that impacts literacy.

Senator Sturgeon noted that a representative from DOE can provide comments and recognized Kathy Kelly.

Kathy Kelly expressed their enjoyment with working with the sponsor and expert team on this legislation. DOE supports the legislation and it is aligned with their current literacy plan and professional learning.

Senator Sturgeon continued with public comment and recognized Barbara Kanter.

Barbara Kanter supports the legislation. Barbara Kanter was a special education teacher and reading specialist for Red Clay Consolidated School District. The training received from Reading Assist served her best for teaching Delaware learners. Barbara Kanter noted this is the first step and further steps are needed to incorporate proper science of reading.

Senator Sturgeon recognized Kristin Dwyer.

Kristin Dwyer, Delaware State Education Association, supports this legislation. This is an appropriate first step for teachers teaching literacy. We are excited to continue to work with Senator Sturgeon to incorporate further science of reading. Kristin Dwyer highlighted previous comments on the issues the education system has had with incorporating proper literacy education. The path forward is a heavy lift but can be completed with proper collaboration at all levels of the Delaware education system.

Senator Sturgeon noted Kristin Dwyer is right and she will be working closely with DSEA on the next steps. Senator Sturgeon recognized Virginia Biasotto.

Virginia Biasotto is appreciative of this legislation. Those children who struggle to read have beautiful characteristics on the right side of their brain. Reading Assist has helped significantly with teaching the science of reading. Teaching phonics is extremely fun.

SB 133 – Reported out of the Committee – 3 (Sturgeon, Lockman, Sokola) = Favorable 2 (Bonini, Lopez) = on its Merits 0= Unfavorable

Senator Sturgeon thanked all the stakeholders, public comments, and the Department of Education for the support of the legislation.

Senator Lockman motioned to adjourn the meeting and **Senator Sokola** seconded the motion.

Senator Sturgeon adjourned the meeting at 12:40.