

**Testimony to the
Joint Legislative Hearing on
Elementary Education/Secondary Education
January 29, 2026**

Thank you, members of the Committee, for allowing me to speak today. My name is Marion Waldman and I am the Executive Director of the nonprofit, Teach My Kid to Read (TMKTR). I am here today to speak in support of the Librarians as Literacy Leaders Initiative, a statewide proposal to ensure public libraries are prepared to support families under New York's new Science of Reading requirements. This initiative is in partnership with the Science of Reading Center at SUNY New Paltz.

New York's Education Law §818 is reshaping how schools teach children to read through evidence-based, Science of Reading-aligned instruction. In 2023, the Governor's Back to Basics initiative invested \$10M to train approximately one-third of New York's in-service teachers in the Science of Reading. This year, the Governor announced that more teachers will be eligible for training, as well as have the opportunity to take the Microcredential. Today, more than forty states have enacted similar laws.

New York took an important first step implementing the new education law. Early statewide ELA results show modest improvement over last year (53% proficient), but roughly half of New York students are still not meeting proficiency benchmarks, underscoring the need for complementary, family-facing literacy support beyond the classroom. Families, however, rely heavily on public libraries for literacy support, especially in communities with limited access to tutoring, child care, or technology. Librarians are often the first "teachers" that parents and caregivers approach when a child struggles with reading. As one public library director put it: "Bringing the Science of Reading to librarians is such an important part of the process of developing equitable community literacy hubs in our libraries. A small investment can make a big impact." — Monica Mooney, Director, Clarence Public Library

This proposed initiative ensures that libraries, our most accessible public learning spaces, can give every family in New York access to informed guidance and equitable literacy support. Participating libraries collectively serve an estimated 150,000–300,000 residents, including thousands of families in high-need communities who would benefit from free literacy support. Librarians are often the first "teachers" that parents and caregivers approach when a child struggles with reading, particularly before formal interventions are available.

TMKTR and SUNY New Paltz propose providing affordable training through the SUNY Science of Reading Microcredential and sustained implementation support through TMKTR's Literacy @Your Library community of practice. To date, approximately 25 librarians have completed the SUNY Science of Reading Microcredential, with a growing list of library professionals seeking training specifically tailored to public library settings and family engagement. This model equips librarians to guide families using simple, print-based, hands-on literacy routines that strengthen foundational reading skills.

We have a tiered budget request, which you will find in our written testimony. **At its most basic, an investment of \$215,000 would support 100 library professionals in earning the MicroCredential.** Twelve libraries would then implement Science of Reading-aligned family literacy programming. Over 1,000+ families would participate in library-based literacy events and workshops. Three thousand decodable books would be added to circulation. An evaluation report would be shared with NYSED and NYSL, inclusive of metrics and a statewide expansion plan. This would be a welcome downpayment on future expansion. Together, this pilot allows the State to test, evaluate, and refine a scalable literacy strategy before committing to statewide expansion.

\$215,000 Program Model

1. SUNY Microcredential Access: 100 librarians or staff complete the SUNY Science of Reading Microcredential (\$50 per participant), building foundational knowledge in decoding, phonics, language development, and early reading instruction.
2. Literacy @Your Library Community of Practice: Participants receive coaching, webinars, curated resources, and peer collaboration to support daily implementation of structured literacy practices in patron interactions, outreach, and family programming.
3. Family Literacy Programming & Mini-Grants: Twelve participating libraries in both urban and rural communities (Rochester, Yonkers, Lewis County are potential sites) receive \$5,000 each to expand decodable book collections and offer family literacy programs that encourage play and strengthen early reading skills.
4. Library & Community Science of Reading Implementation Guide (One-Time Investment): Building on the recent release of the Science of Reading Administrator Leadership Guide, which has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from district and system leaders statewide, SUNY New Paltz and TMKTR propose the co-development of a complementary Library & Community Science of Reading Implementation Guide.

- SUNY MicroCredential Access \$5,000
- Library Mini-Grants (12 × \$5,000) \$60,000
- Evaluation & Reporting \$50,000
- TMKTR Technical Assistance \$75,000
- Library Implementation Guide..... \$25,000

Proposed Timeline

Aug–Oct 2026: Agreements executed with SUNY & TMKTR

Nov–Dec 2026: Librarians begin MicroCredential

June–Dec 2027: Libraries launch family literacy programming

Jan–Mar 2028: Evaluation and statewide expansion plan submitted

Additional Options Enabled by Funding Level

Each funding level advances the same evidence-based strategy, but at increasing depth, scale, and sustainability. Higher investment levels allow New York State to move from piloting and refining the model to embedding Science of Reading-aligned literacy support into libraries as a permanent statewide resource, supported by stable implementation capacity.

\$250,000 Projected Community Reach

Participating libraries collectively serve an estimated 300,000–600,000 residents annually, including families in high-need urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Expected Outcomes

- 200 library professionals earn the SUNY-endorsed MicroCredential, reaching approximately one-quarter to one-third of New York’s public library workforce.
- 20 libraries implement Science of Reading-aligned family literacy programming as designated Literacy Hubs.
- 2,000–3,500 families participate annually in library-based literacy events and workshops.
- 6,000–8,000 decodable books added to circulation statewide.
- Expanded evaluation report submitted to NYSED and NYSL, informing future statewide scaling.

Implementation Capacity

This funding level provides partial support for the dedicated leadership and technical assistance capacity required to manage a multi-regional initiative with strong implementation fidelity. TMKTR coordinates librarian cohorts, supports participating libraries, manages partnerships, and oversees evaluation. While additional fundraising is still required, this level enables a well-managed regional expansion with clear accountability and quality control.

\$500,000 Projected Community Reach

Participating libraries collectively serve an estimated 750,000–1.5 million residents annually across New York State.

Expected Outcomes

- 450 library professionals earn the SUNY-endorsed MicroCredential.
- 45 libraries implement Science of Reading-aligned family literacy programming.
- 6,000–8,000 families participate annually in library-based literacy events and workshops.
- 12,000–15,000 decodable books added to circulation.
- Comprehensive statewide evaluation, including cost-per-library and cost-per-family analysis.

Implementation Capacity

At this funding level, TMKTR can support stable, dedicated leadership capacity to provide consistent technical assistance, coaching, and coordination statewide. This reduces implementation risk, improves consistency across regions, and ensures sustained alignment with Education Law §818 and NYSL and NYSED priorities.

\$1,000,000 Projected Community Reach

Participating libraries collectively serve an estimated 2–3 million New Yorkers annually, significantly expanding equitable access to Science of Reading-aligned literacy support through public libraries.

Expected Outcomes

- 900 library professionals earn the SUNY-endorsed Microcredential.
- 90 libraries implement Science of Reading-aligned family literacy programming as designated Literacy Hubs.
- 15,000–25,000 families participate annually in library-based literacy events and workshops.
- 25,000+ decodable books added to circulation statewide.
- Statewide evaluation and sustainability plan submitted to NYSED and NYSL, outlining long-term implementation, funding alignment, and replication.

Implementation Capacity

This investment level fully supports the long-term implementation backbone, including sustainable executive leadership and program management capacity. Stable staffing ensures continuity, quality control, and the ability to maintain and scale the initiative over time, protecting the State's investment and embedding library-based literacy support into New York's permanent infrastructure.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to include funding for this initiative in your one-house bills and in the Enacted Budget.

Contacts

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