



Press Statement: Stand for Children Arizona Condemns Supt. Horne’s Misleading Claims About ELL Evaluation in Arizona, Launches “Watchdog” Effort

(PHOENIX, AZ) – We at Stand for Children Arizona strongly disagree with the recent comments made by Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Horne, regarding English Language Learners in Arizona. On Tuesday, January 31, Mr. Horne spoke in front of the Arizona State House Education Committee about evaluating ELL students. In an attempt to justify outdated and unpopular tactics in our classrooms, he made bold claims about where data on ELL used to be, where it is today, and how his team will seek to improve on that.

However, Mr. Horne's claims about the effectiveness of structured English immersion in improving English proficiency are misleading. The decline in proficiency rates is not a reflection of SB1014 (a bill Stand for Children Arizona championed) but rather due to the massive impact that the pandemic had on all children. Unfortunately, English Language Learners were one of the most significantly impacted groups because of their deep need for a language rich environment, identified in decades of research and practice from successful English Language Learner programs.

Instead of advocating for a return to an outdated and ineffective system, we should focus on proven approaches to brain development and language skills. We reject any attempt to revert back to the previous system which segregated children for hours a day, years on end, with little success. We urge the public to reject Mr. Horne's claims and to stand with us in our efforts to ensure that all students have access to a robust and inclusive education that prepares them for success in the future.

Given this, Stand for Children Arizona is committed to acting as a watchdog organization over Superintendent Horne’s dangerous rhetoric and political theatre moving forward. We need leaders who will prioritize kids and schools over culture wars. We will continue to advocate for education equity and are dedicated to ensuring career politicians like Superintendent Horne are held accountable for his harmful comments, policies, and actions.