

March 13, 2014

I support **Section 1 of HRB- 5562: An Act Concerning Special Education**. It is past time for Connecticut to acknowledge that Dyslexia is a specific disability. While I believe this bill does not go far enough and should mandate specific interventions and discreet progress monitoring, it is a start and I ask the Legislature to pass it.

My understanding of Dyslexia began in the 1970s. I have a sibling with Dyslexia who grew up to become a very successful entrepreneur. These are those inspiring stories we all love to read about... the Richard Bransons, the Charles Schwabs, the Henry Winklers and our own Governor's story, Dannel Malloy.

Their stories have strikingly similarities. Each depicts a challenging journey throughout their school years. Because teachers and educators didn't understand Dyslexia many assumed these children were either difficult or stupid or both.

In 1978, my sibling had a scribe, an aide and learned to read with tremendous outside supports and over the course of many years.

Today parents believe that once our school systems have our child's diagnosis of Dyslexia -that the school is educated in Dyslexia as a disability. After all, dyslexia affects up to 20% of their student population. Parents learn right away that Dyslexia does not impair intelligence. Parents easily find what reading instruction works for dyslexics, because most of the research was done over 30 years old.

Yet it is 2014 and my son failed in public school with a scribe, an aide and 1:1 instruction that was neither systematic nor scientific. He left public school with the same supports that his uncle had in 1978.

Our son was placed in SRBI in Kindergarten. No one informed our family. I asked everyone why and our Superintendent informed me that Connecticut does not mandate notification to parents of Tier 2 intervention.

We paid privately to have our son evaluated. His intelligence scored well above average but he had a disability that was identified as severe Dyslexia and Dysgraphia. We shared the evaluation with school by the end of Kindergarten.

The following are just some of the beliefs shared with us by well intentioned Teachers and Administrators:

"He will outgrow it."

"Kids develop at different rates."

"You can't expect grade level from him."

"We are able to differentiate classroom instruction for all students."

The last day of 1st Grade, kids run out of the school and proudly hand off a large manila envelope of their year's worth of work into their parent's hands.

My son didn't give me an envelope. I found Aidan's crumpled up in his backpack. It had all seven workbooks. Each was virtually empty. No letter of the week were ever read by my son to the class. The Administration told us to accept that he had tried.

By 2nd Grade, he had to have an aide because he couldn't read though school increased their 1:1 instruction. But it was not provided by a special ed teacher trained in any scientific, research based program for Dyslexics. We increased outside tutoring.

By 3rd Grade, we had finally got him services from a qualified instructor in the school but by then it was too late... Aidan was too far behind his peers.

My son now attends The Windward School in White Plains, NY. He is a different child. His confidence has returned and he is proud that he knows he **can** learn to read.

What legislators need to understand is that all of this was avoidable. The research on the disability of Dyslexia and science of reading is available.

Connecticut is not mandating it is used appropriately by our public schools. The Darien District alone has a bus full of children who attend The Windward School.

Aidan asked me to tell you that it's hard enough to have Dyslexia but it's unfair that he has to leave all his friends to go to another state to learn to read. We agree with him.

26 years have passed since 1978 with little to improve public school, this bill is a start - so please pass **HRB-5562, Section 1**.

Sincerely,

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