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To: Edtestimony@cga.ct.gov Subject: **Raised Bill No. 5562 Testimony
“An Act Concerning Special Education”**

Dear State of Connecticut Legislators:

I support RB No. 5562 and request your approval of this legislation to include dyslexia on the individualized education program (IEP) form. This measure is a first step in recognizing the existence of dyslexia in order to provide educational assistance to those affected by it. I am the parent of a child with dyslexia and have been motivated by this experience to become fully involved in the field of special education advocacy. Currently I serve on the boards of SpEdConnecticut and the Dyslexia Society of Connecticut.

I agree that it is of the utmost importance to acknowledge the existence of dyslexia in Connecticut. Many professionals continue to deny the existence of this complicated set of strengths and struggles. A large part of the reading problem is that Connecticut essentially doesn't acknowledge that dyslexia exists, even though it is a clinical diagnosis.

Unfortunately, including dyslexia in an IEP is only a first step. The crux of the problem for dyslexic students, is in identification and intervention. Many teachers are not properly trained in identifying students who are dyslexic, and this leads to a delay in identification as a student in need of Special Education. Compounding the problem is the issue that teachers are not trained to teach students with dyslexia. Although there is scientific evidence showing appropriate

interventions, our teachers do not have this information or training. A teacher who was working with my son at one time in the resource room, pulling him out of the classroom for specialized instruction for 5 hours a week, remarked that I knew more about the reading program she was using than she did. This should not be the case. In reality, I had taken a 3-day training so that I would understand better what my son needed.

By not appropriately understanding the complexity of dyslexia, we effectively lose these students. By fifth grade my son was so discouraged, he had become a discipline problem. In sixth grade our family made the decision to homeschool. After just one year out of the school system that so misunderstood him, and through working with an educational therapist that was Orton Gillingham trained, he returned to a magnet school. Since that time he has been a high honors student, won the Presidential Gold Award, been nominated for the National Honor Society and achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. Currently he is a sophomore at University High School in Hartford and takes two of his classes at the University of Hartford.

Clearly my son had great potential in elementary school. Unfortunately, the school leaders and teachers were not properly versed in the signs or the remediation of dyslexia and this led to a cycle of behavioral difficulties and unavailability to learn.

Including dyslexia is only a small but important step forward. I look forward to continued progress on this issue.

Sincerely,

Colleen E. Masse