

3/17/14

Representative Fleischmann, Representative Stillman, Senator Linares, and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Raised House Bill No. 5562, **An Act Concerning Special Education**.

I am the parent of a Dyslexic residing in Haddam and am concerned with the lack of training and resources necessary to identify and remediate Dyslexia in our young school children. I am a parent of a Dyslexic. Years ago, I did not want to accept this. I thought that Dyslexia meant that there was an inability to learn. Through much turmoil and research I now understand that Dyslexia is real and it affects 20% of our nation's population. Dyslexics are extremely smart and can be taught to read, and are most successful when afforded certain accommodations that level the playing field. This syndrome is almost 4 times more prevalent than Autism, yet the individuals who are trusted to identify this in our children do not recognize the signs, have difficulty identifying appropriate interventions and fail to understand their obligation under the Child Find law to pursue a Comprehensive Reading Evaluation. My daughter had many, many of the warning signs.

It sounds relatively benign when you're told that your child isn't learning to read... the first year. "No big deal", you're told, "they'll get it". The second year, your child gets more of the same instruction, just in a smaller group and it is now that you begin to see the child you knew start to slip away. Before you know it, your child is feeling worthless and you have no idea what to do or how to help. As a parent you are alone, with no support and no training watching your child sink further and further into anxiety, self doubt, self-loathing, and despair. There are no words to adequately express to you the level of fear, anxiety and pain you feel at watching your child endure this horror day after day in school! After all... they are failing at the very first thing that they were ever asked to do in school, which is to learn to read, and the adults are acting as if they should already know how to do it. Ask any parent of a second grade Dyslexic what their household looks and sounds like in the evenings and they will most likely tell you Armageddon!

It is unconscionable to me that we continue to allow these children to be placed under such duress and turmoil simply because of a lack of training. Our children have the right to be equally afforded the opportunity to be appropriately identified and have their educational needs met as any other child in our schools.

The emotional scars from this kind of turmoil in a child's early life run deep and they rewrite on the canvas of who that child was meant to be forever changing it. I will never truly know the extent of my daughter's scars but I know now that because my daughter is Dyslexic she will find her own path and even better solutions to her problems and she will become an even better version of herself. She only needed to be given wings and, by being explicitly taught, a chance to learn to fly.

I know, through research, that my future grandchildren have a higher chance of struggling with Dyslexia and it is for them that I sit here before you today. I cannot bear the thought of, years from now, going through with my grandchildren what I went through with my daughter and knowing that we had the chance today and sat on the sidelines and didn't do everything that we could to make a difference in their lives.

Please join me in standing up for Dyslexics in all of our lives and future Dyslexics to come by supporting Raised House Bill No. 5562, **An Act Concerning Special Education.**

Thank you for allowing me to share my experiences.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Cynthia Bankoski