

Written Testimony

To Whom It May Concern,

I write this today in support of RHB#5562, and strongly urge the addition of a definition of dyslexia, early identification of dyslexia among children, and professional development and awareness of dyslexia. Our story started when my daughter was only 4 years old. We enrolled her in the town preschool assuming she would get early intervention, since she could not write or draw. Not only were we told she was age appropriate but that we were just overly concerned parents. Within a week of kindergarten starting the teacher called because something was just not quite right. Even with a teacher acknowledging there were clearly issues, we were still told she was age appropriate. By the end of kindergarten she could not read any words, write her name or do any math. We finally retained an advocate and 3 hours of occupational therapy were given, but nothing else. She entered first grade already behind her peers and was given Tier 3 intervention, according to the states SRBI. We were told she was doing well even though we voiced that she still could not read, write or do math. By February of that school year we discovered she had been in Tier 3 intervention, with no improvement for nearly 20 weeks, far beyond the states recommended 6 to 8 weeks. We had a neuropsychological completed at the end of first grade and told she had a double deficit regarding reading or more simply put no phonological awareness or rapid naming skills. The school then attempted a program with no fidelity and spent a year with an untrained special education teacher and our daughter made zero progress while receiving an hour of reading a day and continued to be unable to perform math and barely write. With the retention of an attorney her services tripled. We also obtained an independent reading evaluation which basically concluded our daughter is severely dyslexic.

We are now in third grade and read at a prekindergarten level. Our 8 year old hates school, feels dumb and stupid and is emotionally beginning to unravel. She has always been a wonderful little girl that people are drawn to and has never been a problem at school. We can remember telling the school early on that if she were biting other kids and pulling stuff off the walls, she would have had services thrown at her. We feel we have been put through hell by the school system that we turned to, the supposed experts, for help. All we received were denials and delays and now our once sweet and happy child is VERY ANGRY. She looks like any other 8 year old but is well aware she cannot do the same things her peers can. It is bad enough to be "different" at this age, but when you have professionals who cannot even identify a learning disability it only magnifies the problem. Her 20 weeks in SRBI with a reading specialist, yielded a woman who had been doing this for 35 years to say, she was inattentive. Not that there was some type of reading disability, even though absolutely no progress made.

Through this process we could not help but wonder what do families who do not have the resources do? We both work full time jobs and are your average middle class. To pay for an advocate and then an attorney, not to mention all the time missed from work to advocate for our child, has had a tremendous toll on our family. The schools had no incentive or consequence to address the issue, so why would they? As legislators you need to be aware that those entrusted to do what is in the best interest of our

children does not exist. It is only about the bottom dollar, not about an actual child who is slowly slipping away. If there had been an early screening for dyslexia or professional development for teachers and awareness, maybe we would not be in this position. If programs with fidelity were carried out it would benefit all children, not just mine. The proficiency rates for reading are terrible in this state, and nothing anyone should be proud of.

I work for the Department of Corrections and research shows that 48% of inmates are dyslexic and close to 80% have some type of learning disability. Recent estimates from OPM show it costs between \$40,000 to \$50,000 to incarcerate inmates. I am not saying that dyslexic people automatically go to prison, but to see how, at the age of 8, my daughter feels about herself and school the future isn't looking so bright, but we are parents that are actively involved and have no problem challenging the school system. How many parents are the same? I strongly encourage you to stop being penny smart and pound foolish. Support the definition of, early screening for, and awareness amongst the professionals who work with our children what dyslexia is. My daughter always says that the teachers just don't get her, and my feeling is that they just don't get dyslexia!

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