

Dear Education Committee:

I support Raised Bill No. 5562, Section 1, an Act Concerning Special Education.

Thank you for drafting legislation on Dyslexia. This is a huge step towards improving literacy in our public schools for all students, not just those with Dyslexia. Literacy is the number one reason why public schools exist yet our public school systems in the state of Connecticut are failing too many of our students in teaching them literacy. This bill is the first step towards positive change for a population of students and adults that have suffered because they struggle to read. The population of those who have Dyslexia is estimated to be at 20% according to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity.

I urge you to pass this Bill and include the following in it:

- 1.) A specific category for Dyslexia be included on the IEP (Individualized Education Program) document. Dyslexia needs to be added to the Primary Disability options that can be checked on page one. Without this stipulation, your bill does not achieve what you intend it to: help those with Dyslexia. Dyslexia is real and it needs to be acknowledged as such with its own Primary Disability Category. Call it what it is and give it the specific label because then students can receive the help they need.
- 2.) Fund Professional Development so that teachers and related staff can fully understand what Dyslexia is therefore recognizing symptoms early: identify and diagnose it. Students with Dyslexia can learn to read and the earlier they get appropriate intervention the better. Early intervention is critical and will save districts money over time. It will also greatly improve the potential of students with Dyslexia over their lifetime and helping them become more productive citizens.
- 3.) Fund Research Based Reading Programs and force districts to train teachers in various programs as one size does not fit all. I think you would be amazed at how many districts do not provide any research based reading programs to students receiving special education reading services. This has been my experience with my child in our district and I know many other parents that are other districts and their story is similar.
- 4.) Fund Assistive Technology such as laptops, tablets and other technologies that help students with Dyslexia better access the Curriculum content.

Pass and amend this Bill to include formal identification of Dyslexia along with funding for professional development, early diagnoses and intervention, Research Based reading programs and Assistive Technology. You will help not only those with Dyslexia, but given these amendments you'll affect others struggling to be literate. In summary, helping those with Dyslexia learn to read better will impact a large segment of those who are struggling today, and by addressing Research Based Reading and adding Assistive Technology, you will lead Districts towards having the tools and systems in place to teach all students who struggle with reading and literacy.

Respectfully submitted,

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