

**3/14/2014      DYSLEXIA BILL TESTIMONY**

Distinguished Senators and Representatives, I thank you for providing Connecticut residences and myself the opportunity to speak to you about the Act Concerning Special Education (HRB No. 5562) that you are now considering.

My name is Les Fredette. For the past decade, my wife and I have run a center for literacy difficulties caused primarily by Dyslexia and ADHD. I am here today to support the bill before you, believing that, in the long run, it will bring Dyslexia the much needed recognition that it deserves as being the number one cause of chronic reading difficulties for 20% of people around the world who struggle daily with literacy.

As a man of science, I have been disturbed, confused and even appalled at the numerous times over the past 10 years when listening intensely to parents described how their use of the term dyslexia in special education meetings have been met with skepticism and ignorance, and at times hostility.

It has truly been disturbing that in a state that hosts some of the top research facilities in the world studying Dyslexia, specifically Yale University and the Haskins Institute, the ignorance and resistance in our school system regarding Dyslexia still exists. In fact, it exists to the extent that just a few days ago a parent shared with me that their school's psychologist told them in a PPT meeting that dyslexia did not even exist.

I wish I had the time today to read off to you the almost 600 names of Connecticut children that we have diagnosed with Dyslexia over the past decade. It pains me to relate to you that although the vast majority of these children had formal IEPs, only about five of these children had dyslexia added to their IEPs as a note as the cause of their chronic literacy difficulties, even after they had been formally diagnosed. The result of this lack of proper visibility to their specific neurological profile (meaning Dyslexia) can seriously curtail proper intervention and constructive engagement between parents and educators.

While I strongly support adding Dyslexia to the IEP, simply adding Dyslexia to the form is just a monumental start. Guidelines also need to be established to ensure that the indication of Dyslexia is based on the proper medical identification by a licensed and practicing psychologist or neuropsychologist, in the same way that ADHD must be validated by a medical professional. To make this more apparent, I would suggest that the term Developmental Dyslexia be used on the form in lieu of just Dyslexia, so the designation will be in line with the diagnostic terminology used in the ICD-9/10 (International Classification of Diseases). In addition, a significant effort to provide the appropriate level of understanding about Dyslexia to educators and school psychologists must be aggressively pursued.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

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