

SENATOR CATHY OSTEN

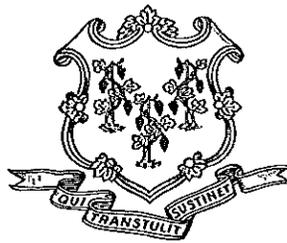
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March 17<sup>th</sup> 2014

Good afternoon Representative Fleischmann, Senator Stillman, ranking members, and members of the Education Committee. I am Senator Cathy Osten, and I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 5562, which adds dyslexia to the individualized education program form used by planning and placement teams for services for children requiring special education.

Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability, and it is estimated that up to 20% of the nation's population suffer from some of the symptoms of dyslexia. Dyslexia, as a term, refers to a cluster of symptoms that result in difficulties with language skills, particularly reading. The core challenges students with dyslexia face are with word recognition, reading fluency, spelling, and writing. These challenges with reading are often attributed to a student's difficulty identifying the separate speech sounds within words or learning how letters represent those separate speech sounds. Additionally, students with less severe symptoms early in their education may experience increased trouble later on when they have to rely on more complex language skills such as grammar, understanding material in a textbook, or writing essays. While dyslexia is most often associated with reading and writing, students with dyslexia could also have problems with spoken language; they may have trouble expressing themselves clearly or trouble comprehending what others say to them. In addition to these academic challenges, dyslexia can also create emotional issues as well, adding to a student's struggles in school.

The broad array of challenges students with dyslexia experience demonstrates the need for action by schools, partnerships with parents, and individualized programs catered to each student. By adding dyslexia to the individualized education program form, this bill places dyslexia on the radar. It can help facilitate recognition and intervention so students with dyslexia can learn in environments that recognize their needs and facilitate their learning. House Bill 5562 helps students by adding dyslexia to the individualized education program form, thereby calling on schools to work with these students so they can best reach their potential.

I have received information from, Decoding Dyslexia, a group dedicated to raising awareness of dyslexia. At the behest of Allison Quirion, the Connecticut Chapter of Decoding Dyslexia was formed in February 2013. The parents help each other by

sharing experiences in the school system and consequently empowering one another to become better advocates for their children. I am grateful to Allison and the members of Decoding Dyslexia for sending me information about their experiences. These stories highlight the need for legislative action in order for our schools to truly take care of dyslexic students.

House Bill 5562 is a step in this direction because it adds dyslexia to the individualized education program form, raises awareness of this diagnosis as a learning disability, and calls on schools to create individualized courses of action for students. I respectfully ask the Committee to join me in support of House Bill 5562. Thank you.