

## *Literacy Learning & Assessment Center of CT*

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March 14, 2014

### EDUCATION COMMITTEE TESTIMONY

Re: Raised Bill No. 5562, An Act Concerning Special Education

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for Section 1 of Raised Bill 5562 – while also emphasizing the critical need for additional provisions, either within this bill or in a subsequent bill.

As an independent reading specialist who works with students with a wide array of diagnoses, as well as a Board member of the Dyslexia Society of Connecticut, I appreciate the intent of this critically important proposed legislation. Given the strong linguistic basis of dyslexia, those whose struggles are attributable to this diagnosis require remediation that is both specialized and intensive; as MRI scans have irrefutably demonstrated, their brains can actually be “rewired” if – but only if – such remediation is received, and delivered by an adequately trained and experienced teacher, ideally beginning at a young age.

Adding a “SLD-Dyslexia” label to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) form is an important first step in enabling students diagnosed with dyslexia to receive appropriate remediation. Depriving individuals with dyslexia of the remediation they require is not only an educational issue; it is a social and emotional issue as well. Moreover, such remediation not only saves young minds but also money. Research shows that if a child is not reading at grade level in first grade, his/her chances of becoming a proficient reader, without appropriate intervention, is negligible. The cost to our educational system – as well as society – of these educational casualties is enormous.

However, this proposed bill will only help those students who have already been diagnosed, or who are currently in the process of being evaluated for this diagnosis; it will do nothing for those – which research has shown to be the majority of students with dyslexia – who have not, and likely will never, be diagnosed. According to 30 years of longitudinal research conducted at Yale University, one in five children in Connecticut is dyslexic – yet nowhere near that number has been identified in our state. It is therefore critical that additional language be included within this bill to provide for the teacher training and associated data collection required to make such a diagnosis at an early age – or, alternatively, that this bill be passed as is with the assurance that such additional provisions would be made in future.

I urge you to support this legislation, which is a small but critical step forward – as well as to pursue the additional provisions necessary to ensure that most children with this diagnosis get the help they desperately need.

Thank you for your continued commitment to meeting the diverse literacy needs of our children, and for providing the opportunity for me to share my perspective regarding this critical proposed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sheryl Knapp'.

Sheryl Knapp, M.Ed., A/AOGPE  
Founder/President, Literacy Learning & Assessment Center of CT  
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