March 14, 2014

To: State of Connecticut Education Committee

From: William T. Supple

Re: Public Hearing on March 17, 2014 at 11:00 a.m.
Bill No. 5562, An Act Concerning Special Education

To the Education Committee Members:

I am in support of Bill No. 5562, Section 1, An Act Concerning Special Education, however, there are key components missing. Specifically, a formal definition of dyslexia and professional development.

I am a life long resident of Connecticut. Approximately, eights years ago I went through medical assessments which showed that I was in the early stages of Parkinsons. During this testing I also received a diagnosis of dyslexia. Finding out that I had dyslexia at the age of 65 answered many questions that I had about myself and clarified the struggles I had.

I was born and raised in Hartford, Connecticut and attended Hartford Public Schools. I had a father who worked for the Hartford Police Department is entire life, supported our family and cared for my mother who was ill from cancer. I spent a lot of time with my grandparents while my mother was sick. I was raised by the old school rules of "Children should be seen and not heard". I excelled at sports, had a gift for fixing things with my hands and had great friends. These positive aspects of my life where, at times, out shined by the fact that I could barely read or write. I felt different and isolated and turned to the "bad boy" on the block. I found it easier to be known for causing trouble, than the dumb kid. This landed me expulsion from every High School in Hartford. I was headed down the wrong road. My father told me my last resort was technical school, as I was headed for juvenile detention. Technical school saved my life! I finally was at a school where I was good at something. I excelled at everything mechanical and had a successful career in manufacturing and later consulting.

The diagnosis of dyslexia made these events clearer. It explained why I had difficulties reading and writing. It solidified the fact that I wasn't stupid, but just learned differently. The gift I have as a visual learner could and out of the box thinker could be attributed to my dyslexia. This is my experience from 60 years. Back then they did not have the science, research or data. But, now we have the ability to identify children as early as kindergarten. However, as I have seen with my grandson, not much has changed. He too has dyslexia. He too has felt anxiety and stress. He too would not have been identified if it wasn't for the hard work and persistence of his mother advocating on his behalf.

You have the ability to change things. A cycle that has been running in my family for over 60 years. You need to break that cycle!

A formal definition of dyslexia, will provide an understanding of what dyslexia is and isn't. By providing teachers with professional development concerning dyslexia awareness will not only support our teachers, but in turn support our dyslexic students.

I cannot fathom that nothing has changed in 60 years. Break the cycle, make change!

William T. Supple
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