

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 1054, An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia

My name is Dawn McNary, a parent of a 5th grader in East Haddam, CT. It was a year ago that my son and I came before this committee to discuss the importance of recognizing Dyslexia as a SLD and giving educators the tools to identify and intervene in the classroom. The resulting addition of the Dyslexia SLD box on the students' IEP form was a step in the right direction. But we still have so far to go.

Let me explain how different two schools in two different worlds can be for the same student with the same data. Our child was receiving interventions to provide decoding skills to deal with Dyslexia and our child was placed in a pull out program 5 days a week, small group instruction, tailored directly to Dyslexic instruction(MTA*program) in Texas- then we moved to CT and using the 'exact same data' we were being told 'There is no evidence of Dyslexia'. There are no programs we can offer to help your child. We can put accommodations in place, but no direct teaching is available as we see no problem. This experience was shocking because we KNEW there was an answer. We had EXPERIENCE with an answer, with a program, with a teacher, with an administrator and with a district that felt early identification and intervention of Dyslexia, Dysgraphia and Dyscalculia were important enough to have a specialist in each elementary school and to train every elementary teacher to recognize the signs and to make appropriate referrals to the specialist for further evaluation. To move to CT and be forced to watch our child suffer through an ENTIRE ACADEMIC YEAR due to the politics, semantics, and professional posturing as a result of the lack of understanding and lack of clarity surrounding the word dyslexia has been painful. It has also been completely unacceptable.

A lack of understanding of how to identify students for additional screening, followed by a lack of training to provide teachers with the tools to screen is an impediment to moving forward in being able to effectively work with our dyslexic students. This failure in the system causes frustration on all fronts; teacher/classroom, student/classroom, parent/homework, student/homework, report cards. There need not be this level of frustration.

By providing up and coming educators, as well as current educators and administrators, with training necessary to recognize Dyslexia along with early assessment tools you would provide the data necessary to work with as many students as possible through early intervention. If more administrators had proper training they would understand the complexities of Dyslexia and how it can present in different forms in different children, yet the result of missing the window of intervention is the same for all- frustration, feelings of failure, and battles around classwork and homework both in school and at home. Our children deserve better than what they have today. That is why I am asking you to support Senate Bill 1054, An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia.

*MTA refers to Multisensory Teaching Approach as defined on http://mtspublications.com/?page_id=341

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