

**Testimony submitted by:**  
**Kim Just**  
**Chester, CT**

**RE: SB 1054**

It is my pleasure to submit this testimony in support of SB 1054, An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia.

I am the mother of a 16 year old son who was diagnosed with severe dyslexia and dysgraphia at the end of third grade. He was tested by the school in first grade and received special education services with a diagnosis of Specific Learning Disability. The teachers frequently told us that he had difficulties focusing and staying on task which was contributing to his lack of progress.

The decision to have him tested independent from the school came after observing Zachary continue to make little to no progress in reading and writing. He developed extreme anxiety and by third grade experienced panic attacks in the classroom as he recognized that he could not perform in the same capacity as other students in the class. As I began to research on my own to find some answers and possible solutions, Dyslexia kept coming up as a possible issue.

My husband and I shared the report describing the testing performed and the dyslexia and dysgraphia diagnosis with the school to incorporate the recommendations into Zachary's IEP. The recommendations stressed the importance of a systematic multi-sensory approach to reading and writing instruction such as Orton Gillingham. To our disappointment, the recommendations were not implemented as there was a lack of teachers with the proper training. As an alternative, we sent Zachary to an independent facility after school to obtain the proper instruction at our expense.

The remainder of Zachary's elementary school years became increasingly stressful as little progress was made with his reading and writing. His anxiety increased and he began to experience isolation and rejection from peers. We explored many avenues to provide outside instruction as well as private schools.

By the time Zachary entered middle school (seventh grade), he was reading at the second grade level. He continued to experience extreme anxiety and continued isolation and lack of acceptance from peers. His self-esteem was very low and my husband and I were heartbroken to see him struggle in all aspects of his life. Up until third grade, he was always such a happy kid and had a smile on his face all of the time. It was at this point that we hired an Advocate to help us and some positive changes were made.

Fast forward, Zachary is now in tenth grade and still receives special education services and has just been mainstreamed slowly into a few classes. He has a very modified program and has aspirations to go to college like many of his peers; however we aren't sure what path he can follow for post secondary education. He is a very bright young man and we have done everything we feel we can in our power to give him the chance to be successful. I know from experience that if Zachary had intervention earlier in his school career and if teachers were trained to identify the symptoms of dyslexia and provide the instruction necessary to teach children with dyslexia there would be no hesitation about his ability to attend college.

While I was fortunate enough to have my husband's support and involvement through this entire journey, it is a very stressful process to advocate for your child when you are not an educator. Please consider my testimony to implement the changes necessary to provide children with dyslexia the chance to be successful in school and in life.