

Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg, and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Lawrence Berliner and I am writing in my professional capacity as an attorney who represents children with disabilities and their families in legal matters involving regular and special education matters. I would urge your support and the Committee's support of Raised Bill 1054. As an attorney who has been practicing in the field of special education law for over thirty years, all too often I have encountered students in regular education and special education settings whose reading needs have not been effectively addressed, especially in the elementary school grades, the educational setting where the development and acquisition of basic foundational reading skills should occur. Passing along students who cannot read onto the next grade level without proper supports and the knowledge of the fundamental principles of reading, is the equivalent of *passing without learning*. Social promotions is a disservice to students and their families and will set up such students for failure in later grades and limit their post-secondary education, employment, and other opportunities in life after they complete their formal public school education.

Last year the General Assembly enacted legislation that recognized dyslexia as a category of eligibility for special education services. The proposed legislation will expand upon last year's legislation by requiring teachers to become knowledgeable about evidence reading practices for students with dyslexia. I believe the proposed legislation should go even farther and require teachers to be competent and capable to implement such evidence based reading practices in the classroom setting for any student who has been diagnosed with dyslexia or who has been identified as being at risk of not reading at grade level. As you may be aware, there is body of research coming out of Yale University through both Drs. Shaywitz and the Haskins Institute, as well as the Connecticut Commission on Children and the state universities that clearly demonstrate the risks associated with children who are not reading properly by the end of third grade. In particular, such students will have fewer educational and other opportunities when compared to students who are capable of reading on grade level.

I would urge you and members of the Education Committee to enact this legislation and if possible, to expand upon it and ensure that the local school districts have all the resources necessary to ensure that classroom teachers have acquired and developed the professional skills necessary to properly teach children with dyslexia and the school districts have materials available to meet the needs of all students who have been diagnosed with dyslexia and/or who have been identified as being at risk of not reading on grade level.

We need to ensure that children with dyslexia and those who are at risk of not reading on grade level are not falling further behind academically as they matriculate from grade to grade. Our

children deserve no less if they are going to acquire academic, social, and other necessary skills that they will need in order to be properly prepared for challenges they will face after they complete their public education and move onto post-secondary education, enter the work place, and become productive members of our society.

Thank you.

Lawrence Berliner