

March 5, 2015

Testimony in Favor of Proposed Bill 1054

Mr. Chairman and the members of the committee,

My name is Lynn Stabnick. I'm from Wethersfield and I'm here to speak in favor of Senate Bill 1054 titled An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia. Our public school teachers need additional and crucial information on qualifying students with dyslexia.

My son Matthew will be nine years old at the end of March. He's been in public schools for four years now and is currently reading at the first grade level. We have a history of learning problems in our family and the genetic link is very evident in Matthew.

When Matthew was in preschool, his teacher approached me and said that she was concerned because Matthew wasn't keeping up with the other children. This was more evident once Matthew started public school. He started the SRBI process in the Spring of 2012 while still in Kindergarten. He was eligible for special education services in 2013. In 2013, Matthew's teachers told me that there was "definitely something going on" with Matthew's ability to learn but they didn't know what. They admitted to me that they didn't know how to classify him on his IEP so they were going to list him with "Speech or Language Impairment" as the primary disability. Please note that Matthew is an articulate, athletic, well-behaved, sociable boy, without any physical disabilities. He also tested in the range of average intelligence. He has a positive attitude and likes going to school. That being said, there is no simple explanation as to why his ability to read and write has been so significantly delayed.

I believe there's a strong possibility that Matthew may have dyslexia. His teachers and his tutor have been working very hard with him but have been unable to close the gap between his current reading level and his average grade level. I believe that having an approved definition of dyslexia is absolutely necessary for my son. If he does have dyslexia, his learning disability could be identified and his teachers could find more appropriate and effective learning instruction. Last month at our PPT meeting, his teachers would not change Matthew's IEP classification from "Speech or Language Impaired" to "Specific Learning Disabilities / Dyslexia" because of the general lack of knowledge and the lack of a definition by the State. The PPT team did not deny that dyslexia may be a possibility; however they wouldn't agree to change his primary disability without additional information from the State on qualifying students. This is stated as such on my son's IEP dated 02/23/15 within the Summary Section.

My son's teachers need some guidance from the State on this topic. Now that there is a dyslexic classification, our public school teachers need more help in identifying these children. My greatest fear is that Matthew's learning disability will always be misunderstood and he will not receive the help he needs. If this happens, he will fall farther and farther behind in school and eventually give up. I feel that my son's teachers are trying their best to teach my son but are limited in their understanding of his unique needs. Please provide some well-deserved and crucial guidance to our public school teachers on this distinct leaning disability.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynn Stabnick

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