

March 11, 2015

Honorable Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Sue Haynie. I'm a parent of 2 dyslexic children now in college, President of NorwalkSEEKS, and a member of Decoding Dyslexia CT.

I support SB 1054, An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia as a small but positive step. I would like to request that additional supports be added to the bill: 1) Early screening for dyslexia and 2) Evidence based interventions for dyslexic students taught with fidelity and provided by a highly qualified practitioner.

Fifteen years ago, when my 2 children were in kindergarten and not learning to read, they were screened for reading issues and eventually provided special ed services. Although neither child could remember people's names, knew their colors, paid attention to letters or appreciated rhyme, all classic signs of dyslexia, never did any school professional use the word dyslexia, or tell me my children had the classic signs of being dyslexic. My children had been 'screened' for reading failure but No school staff, from principal on down, was aware of the significance of these Waving Red Flags as they related to dyslexia.

Eleven years ago, when my two teenagers were in 2nd and 3rd grade, having already failed a grade, they were still not able to read beyond a few words in spite of one-on-one support in special ed. Five years in their local public school and they had Failed to Progress, what a waste, and Why? Because although my kids had occasionally been taught with evidence based interventions like Wilson, Orton Gillingham or LindaMood Bell, these programs had not been implemented with fidelity. None of the several special ed teachers they had, although kind and with years of special ed experience, were highly qualified in providing reading instruction to dyslexic students, having had only 'drive-by' Professional Development in evidence based interventions. This is a problem not at all unique to Norwalk.

I was lucky, I was able to find the money and removed my children from their Norwalk public schools for 9 weeks to go to a literacy clinic, Linda Mood Bell, where progress is monitored, the program is implemented with fidelity and staff

is highly trained. My kids returned to school, having advanced THREE GRADE levels in 9 weeks. It wasn't that they couldn't learn how to read. They had been instructional casualties, their years of Failure to Progress unnecessary.

Today, both my kids are great readers, both are freshman in college.

In Connecticut, my 2 dyslexic children's Failure to Progress in reading at their local school is not the exception, it's the rule. And this is wrong. To quote Dr. Bennett Shaywitz of the Yale Center for Dyslexia, "We know more about dyslexia than we do about cancer. We know how to identify it correctly, and intervene at an early age. We can't say that about many other medical conditions."

There are 3.1M teachers in America and 2.5M students classified with Specific LD, approximately 80% are dyslexic. Both groups have due process rights. Does anyone in this room believe that if these millions of dyslexics were as united in exercising their due process rights as effectively as Unions, the State of Connecticut would be moving so slowly in addressing this travesty of human failure and lost potential?

Thank you,

Sue Haynie

Norwalk, CT