

Public Hearing on Education Committee's Senate Bill No. 317,
An Act Concerning Dyslexia, on 3/2/16
Oral Testimony given by Bonnie Early

Good morning, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Educational Committee for giving parents like me the opportunity to testify here today.

My name is Bonnie Early; I'm a parent of a student who is dyslexic in the Newtown, CT school district.

I support Senate Bill No. 317, an Act Concerning Dyslexia, with Amendments.

Many people do not realize that dyslexia affects 1 in 5 children, that is 20% of the student population in a school district. Therefore, in every class sits a child with dyslexia, probably more than that. That is a lot of students. Despite the great amount of research about dyslexia these students are overlooked and their needs are not being addressed. Unfortunately, I have witnessed this first hand.

My concern here today is that we need to listen to what the research is telling us...it's telling us that effective instruction is the key to unlocking the potential of every child with dyslexia. Effective instruction needs to be explicit, systematic, cumulative, multisensory and most importantly done with fidelity.

Teaching these students requires considerable knowledge and skills. I know from personal experience that the teachers given these tasks in both general and special education (at all levels) are not prepared to recognize and instruct these students with dyslexia, without proper training.

I'm asking the Education Committee here today, to please consider promoting a more rigorous and effective program for those who are matriculating into the education field by:

- Using comprehensive evidence based curriculum and content (graduate level) in teacher preparation at our CT Institutions of Higher Education, regarding the literacy instruction for students with Dyslexia.
- Teacher preparation must align with evidence based standards that are proven to be effective.
- This bill calls for "a Course" in Dyslexia - NOT SUFFICIENT enough.

According to a recent article dated January 7th 2016, in the New Times, the Commissioner of State Education, Dianna Wentzell said "By far the largest percentage of students receiving Special Education are those having learning disabilities." she goes on to say "One of the biggest reasons they get that label is failure to read by third grade." The article also stated that specific learning disabilities make up the highest percentage, 4.4%, of those receiving Special Education in Connecticut.

Therefore, I implore you to think about 20% of the student population who are dyslexic as you go forward and remember instruction is the key to the education they deserve.