

February 29, 16

Dear Committee:

My written testimony is in support of an amendment of Senate Bill 317. An Act Concerning Dyslexia must ensure evidence based teaching practices consistent with the International Dyslexia Association's data. These methodologies are proven to give optimal outcomes for our dyslexic students. As a dyslexic mother and recipient of such strong remediation I am advocating that all children have access to best practice reading instruction. My daughter is dyslexic and I have had to advocate avidly in our local town for appropriate literacy interventions. I write as an advocate of literacy for all children across our state. We need parity at the higher education level. Sadly, over one hundred years of data has not translated into mainstream classroom practice. Please facilitate teacher preparation including evidence-based practice reading remediation ensuring all children benefit from reading instruction with full fidelity.

I would like to paint a picture of the dyslexic experience when we are mandated to read, write, and speak in the world of academia without strong educator. Imagine you were forced to communicate in old English. Depending on your intelligence, you might comprehend some of what was being said around you or read in print. However, you would have to reread quite a bit. You would miss oral directions. If you had to write in old English, it would take you more time to decipher how to write words. You would spend even more time thinking about the order of your words. Simply put, would not feel natural for you. How would you feel if your teacher was so unprepared for your existence that they demand you to, "try harder, look at the words harder, or focus on the directions

harder!” You would feel many emotions such as frustrated, ashamed, and overwhelmed. Now, that is how dyslexics suffer everyday in the world of academia. The ramifications of these emotions lead to a perpetuation of mental health concerns in our dyslexic students as they grow into adulthood.

An educator implementing the appropriate evidence based methodology with fidelity is the equivalent of taking old English and teaching it through Shakespeare’s plays. Someone prepared to meet the students’ needs is essential. Suddenly, this frustrating language comes to life. Through the multisensory experience of theater, the language makes sense broken into “parts.” The unnatural old English, when presented through the multisensory experience of theater, is understood. Evidence based instruction might be necessary for a dyslexic student to fully comprehend a lesson, but it has benefits for the whole class of students. This training, this mandated graduate preparation, empowers a passionate educator with the tools he or she will need to meet the needs of the 1 in 5 students in their classroom who are dyslexic as well as give them more ways to engage all students in the class.

A course in dyslexia is not sufficient for the 20% of students who need evidence based and phonic based literacy instruction with fidelity. Teachers of reading need comprehensive graduate level evidence based curriculum and content in our institutions of higher education reflective of over 100 years of evidence about best practice literacy instruction. Our teachers need to be prepared with understanding of the neurodiverse reality of our student population so all children can read. Reading is the single most important contribution our schools provide our children. Please consider a strong

graduate requirement so that all teachers are prepared to remediate dyslexic students with fidelity across our state.

Thank you,
Carina Drake
Ridgefield, CT