

February 29, 2016

Education Committee

Re: SB 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia

Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to express my support of SB 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia, however I wish to share some concerns. As parent of a dyslexic student, an Orton-Gillingham practitioner, and the Director of Connecticut's only Orton-Gillingham clinic accredited by the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators, the only organization that sets the bar for the high standards and strict requirements for teaching programs necessary to remediate the needs of *all* Dyslexic students, I am extremely concerned about the effect that having a public teaching community with a *little* knowledge of what quality reading instruction looks like may have on the dyslexic students within our education system. We have seen program after program move into our state espousing that they offer a sufficient enough reading program to remediate the specific needs of every dyslexic. These programs consistently fall short in meeting the needs of dyslexic students. In each instance these programs lack either sufficient Phonemic awareness, sufficient reliance on the language aspect of reading (the phonetic basis of quality reading instruction), sufficient opportunities for repetition or individualization for the particular needs of the student and/or sufficient opportunities to practice teaching under a highly experienced mentor. These programs do not meet the Academy's strict requirements known to result in success for dyslexic students and thus can only state that they are 'based on' the Orton-Gillingham Approach. This concerns me due to the fact there has historically been a tendency to 'blame the child' when a remediation plan has failed. A remediation plan that has been developed by a poorly or insufficiently trained teacher will in all likelihood fail a dyslexic student. This can become an even greater problem if the individual falsely feels as though they are prepared to meet the student's individual needs as a dyslexic student when they have not had sufficient experience with the vast and varied learning profiles that can be present from one dyslexic student to the other. I say this based on personal experience. Accordingly, one of the tenets of Orton-Gillingham is that a student should not be held accountable for knowing something that we have not taught them, thusly for teachers, a teacher does not know what they have not been taught. This combination would be disastrous to an impressionable and vulnerable dyslexic student.

In conclusion, a half-hearted commitment to the effort to train teachers in remediating the needs of even the most severely dyslexic student will, I fear, result in the continuation of the lack of access to a quality reading program that dyslexics are so deserving of, thereby

continuing to relegate these students to the same marginalization that they so routinely find themselves the victims of within the current system.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Bankoski

Email: Cindy.bankoski@comcast.net