

My name is Dawn McNary. I am a parent and I live in East Haddam, CT. I am providing testimony concerning Senate Bill No. 317, an Act to require any person applying for a remedial reading, remedial language arts or reading consultant endorsement to have completed a course that includes instruction on dyslexia.

Thank you for bringing this important issue up for discussion.

My son has stood before this committee multiple times and asked for your help in working toward a better situation for all students in Connecticut, including those with Dyslexia.

Dyslexia is un recognized or brushed aside in many school districts. I, too, have stood before this committee multiple times and asked for your help. Thank you for what you have been trying to do. Thank you for what you are trying to change.

The sad reality for so many children, including my own, is that what we have all worked so hard to accomplish has taken so long and is being met with such resistance that those who are losing out the most are the children, the very people our efforts are designed to assist. As a parent, and I am sure you as the Education Committee, recognize change is difficult. Change in Public Education in Connecticut is also painfully slow.

September 2013 I enrolled my child in the CT School System and am fighting for the same recognition of his SLD as he held in Texas in CT to this day. In three years precious little progress has been made. Any suggestion of change has been met with great resistance. My child has been stripped of all the learning and advancement he made in TX. My child has been made to feel inferior and marginalized in the classroom and in the district.

My child is 11.

Age 11. Feeling marginalized at age 11 is not ok. It also is not necessary. Children inherently want to learn, they want to grow into little adults, they absorb the world around them and seek information. Yet, when they are left out because they cannot understand assignments and work is overwhelming and they are repeatedly told 'it can't be Dyslexia' 'don't care what they said in TX in CT that isn't the case', what is the message being sent?

And to the child who has NEVER had the opportunity to be in a

Texas school, has NEVER had the chance to feel success in the classroom. Has NEVER felt the joy that comes from moving from one level to the next and up three more levels in reading from proper teaching methodologies that truly reach them- to that child who has only ever sat in a CT classroom and been grouped in 'resource room' or 'intervention group' or 'after school practice' to that child you owe an apology and you owe decisive action. That child- those children- need to know there is a better way. This situation in CT schools is entirely fixable.

There will be some need for overlap in education as you work to provide services for those students who, up until now, have slipped through the cracks and moved from grade to grade without actually achieving what they were and are capable of achieving. However once the new and fully tested teaching methodologies have been implemented with qualified professionals in the schools and districts in the K-6 grades the situation will be addressed earlier, the remediation will begin much more quickly and the successes will grow exponentially.

This is a win-win for children and schools.

So why does this not happen today. The issue I have observed is not because of bad people who do not care- but rather people that do not have the training to do what is necessary to address the issue at hand. These are people that have not been formally introduced to 'What Dyslexia looks like' 'What Dyslexia can be similar to, but different from.' 'What Dyslexia is NOT.' 'What works with Dyslexic students and what does not.'

Higher education does not educate teacher candidates on this subject, presumably because it is not mandatory or even seen as 'critical in the classroom'. Yet, with 1 in 5 children having Dyslexia (diagnosed or undiagnosed) that means that a significant portion of the population in each and every teacher's classroom is suffering and facing a future of being marginalized by the very system that claims to want to educate and mold these young minds.

The time for, as I understand SB317 to "require any person applying for a remedial reading, remedial language arts or reading consultant endorsement to have completed a course that includes instruction on dyslexia", is just not sufficient. Children, like my son, have already lost the entire Elementary School and part of

Middle School years to the inability of educators, who have attended 'a course', to effectively and with fidelity address the myriad of issues that must be addressed in the day to day learning of the Dyslexic student. A teacher taking 'A' Course will not change a system that is unwilling to change. The time is NOW for action. Look to other states- Look at the results. I have stood before you in the past to speak of our experiences in Texas.

Texas has been addressing Dyslexia and doing so successfully since the 1980's. Educators that identify, screen and test for Dyslexia in the classroom are the biggest key to the success of the Texas model. Teachers in the classroom are with the children for the majority of the school day. These teachers observe our children in an academic setting as well as social/play setting at the younger ages. This gives great perspective to the teacher and the knowledge, based on training, to identify those indicators that say NOT 'there is something wrong' but rather 'We are not reaching this child in the best possible way, could there be a better way?' These teachers are not gaining this knowledge and ability through a One and Out course approach.

Asking "How can we better reach these students?" and moving to screening and then to identification, if applicable, allows the classroom teacher to get assistance from the onsite specialist whose sole focus is Dyslexia. Not a SPED teacher who carries a class or two of dyslexic intervention groups, Not a SPEECH teacher who teaches a few students a part of the Wilson program or LiPS Program. Not a Reading Intervention specialist who has among her large caseload a bucket or two of kids that fall under Dyslexia umbrella to try to reach. Not a teacher who has taken one course and checks a box to say 'dyslexia training compliant'. This is NOT about checking boxes. No – not that at all. This is about having actual knowledge and skillsets that are scientifically proven to address the needs of the Dyslexic child and to provide the applicable tools to the district education to insure that all children can be reached through the programs, when taught with absolute fidelity. This is a Dyslexia Specialist who is fully trained in the Multi-Sensory teaching approach that

is scientifically proven to produce results that lead to self-understanding of challenges and an understanding of the tools available to make learning possible, upon successful completion of the program. This is how REAL CHANGE can be made, in an otherwise broken system.

Attached is [The Dyslexia Handbook link](#) and I beg you, I implore you, to each and every one, read this document and embrace as much of it as possible. The work has been done for you. There is so much to gain by taking decisive action that changes the lives of so many children as soon as the next school year and beyond. And there is so much to lose by simply putting together a 'task force' that gives the illusion of change-without actually making any effective change at all. This 'task force' approach equates to yet another Elementary Generation moving onto the upper school grades lacking the ability to read and write effectively and feeling marginalized enough by the system to want to 'drop out' and worse actually making the decision to drop out or act out.

The topics discussed in the document include but are not limited to the following:

- *Outlines curriculum requirements for institutions of higher education for teacher preparation ...*
- *Continuing education requirements for educators who teach students with Dyslexia*
- *Guidelines for establishing best practices when considering factors for promotion and the student identified with Dyslexia*
- *Online technology tools for the student with Dyslexia*

Early and intense intervention with scientifically proven methodology is critical to the success of the intervention process and the future success of the student. Early intervention is also much less expensive to the district as a whole.

Our Texas experience was a Multi-sensory teaching approach that is taken on 5 days a week 40 min a day. This class is taught

by a Dyslexia Specialist who has undergone significant training and is usually replacing the child's main classroom reading or language arts/spelling block of time. The children of the entire class are thus learning in parallel fashion but being reached according to their needs. Let me explain how this differs from the CT approach of incorporating a portion of the LiPS program into a speech class, using a teacher untrained in the LiPS program to administer as best as possible, with none of the reporting or continuation pieces that go with the program- all in 20 min 2 X week.

Can you see how the concept of focused, scientifically based teaching methods, that are taught with fidelity are going to reach and impact far greater numbers of children than any speech teacher, with a full caseload, who is untrained and asked to 'make it work' would ever be able to on 20 min 2Xweek?

Dyslexia and the teaching methods that are proven and effective cannot be conveyed in an afternoon or a three-day seminar.

These are significant in scope of study and as such are best addressed for new teachers at the higher education level and for existing teachers either at the Master's level or spread out over a Continuing Education cycle.

Please make the decision to bring forward real change, what needs to be done is before you and has been brought before you repeatedly over the last few years. You can make a difference in children's lives effective immediately. Please do- please bring education and access to education for all children into every single CT classroom as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and attention to this deeply personal issue.

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Reference : Texas Education Association [The Dyslexia Handbook](#)

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