

Name: Jamie Taylor, Parent
Town: Suffield, CT

I am in support of Senate Bill No.317 - WITH AMENDMENTS, An Act Concerning Dyslexia.

This is my written testimony and I will not be testifying at the hearing.

As a parent of a profoundly dyslexic daughter, I am in support of ANY bill regarding dyslexia. I cannot stress the importance of having not only educators, but especially teachers appropriately educated regarding the spectrum of dyslexia diagnosis. Dyslexia has varying degrees of disability and has different types. Most teachers have heard of dyslexia but have NEVER been formally trained on how to identify a possibly dyslexic student or even how to modify their learning and teaching styles to include dyslexic students. Not only does that affect every dyslexic student, it sets them up for failure and low self esteem throughout their educational careers! These are bright students that are not given the chance to shine in the classroom because many times they cannot do the most basic of skills related to reading, writing, spelling and/or math.

Kids know when other kids can't keep up and these dyslexic students quickly become a silent target within the classroom. This can lead to behavior issues and other outward signs of stress which does not help the child in any way and actually makes life worse for them, as far as school is concerned. It does not help that schools and administrators do not recognize dyslexia unless parents or caregivers pay **out of pocket** for a dyslexia diagnosis and evaluation. Many of **these evaluations run hundreds to thousands of dollars!** Most parents DO NOT have the financial resources to do this and thus MANY students go unidentified for this sad fact. Dyslexia testing is not covered by insurance either.

This is not only unethical because **highly educated people know what dyslexia is and how to treat it** but it is blatantly ignored by school districts across the state. I have been in 3 school districts desperate to get help and every district has the same flat affect when I mention dyslexia. Simply providing "a course on dyslexia" is not specific enough to identify goals and objectives for educators to learn and implement. Providing a course IS NOT a substitution for graduate level training for understanding and implementing learned goals and objectives. Who will monitor these educators after their "dyslexia course" to assess their understanding of the information and is that the purpose of the course to only gain an understanding? Having certified, trained teachers in dyslexia intervention should be considered a bare minimum. Dyslexia is not the same everyone and it has a spectrum just like Autism which ranges from mild to severe. Having a teacher trained for interventions across the dyslexia spectrum is critical.

We need to get to the root of the problem (for educators, students and districts) and that can only be done when you put a formal process in place after

identifying a student that may be dyslexic. The plan would need to 1. **Assess** (a trained dyslexia expert to identify and diagnose), 2. **Diagnose** 3. **Plan**(Linda Mood-Bell, Orton-Gilligham etc.) 4. **Implement** (IEP) and 5. **Evaluate** continuously (progress r/t peers, is the program working?).

Students and adults who cannot read proficiently by 3rd grade cannot succeed without intense intervention. Most teachers and special ed reading interventionists do not have the ability to provide intensive intervention for moderate to profound dyslexics in order for them to read like they're peers. **They will always be behind!** If we continue to deny appropriate intervention then natural social intervention will be the outcome as evidenced by low graduation rates and prison enrollment. That is the reality. Dyslexia is a lifelong disability that impacts every aspect of a dyslexic person's life. Filing out an application for a job, a driver's license or writing an essay for college is almost a torture for these students. Spell check does not help when you cannot read. Listening to text does not help them read. Only learning how to read will help them.

I understand this testimony has taken on many issues related to dyslexia aside from having the bill supported. But just like a cancer diagnosis, **you must understand all of the components** of it before you identify it and decide on a treatment. The person deciding your cancer treatment is an expert in that field and will monitor you for progress. The same goes for Dyslexia. Having an expert in the field of dyslexia should be the driver of any bill proposed whether it is in regard to trainings, identifications, progress identifiers and of course for interventions. **There is no hidden agenda for parents of dyslexic students.** We want our kids to be able to read proficiently in order to navigate and have a normal life. The students themselves struggle to survive each school day without anyone finding out about their disability, because that is what it is, don't be fooled. It can be overcome but the ignorance surrounding it right now by districts and teachers, who are not at fault, needs to be addressed.

Perhaps this bill can be a platform for not only more intense conversations regarding dyslexia but to bring together dyslexia experts and talk about interventions that are evidenced based.

Unfortunately, my daughter cannot read my testimony. She has been in special education since first grade. She is now almost 14 years old and cannot accurately read more than 2 sentences of this. For this reason, I ask that the Education Committee seriously consider more than just this proposed bill for dyslexic students. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.