

Testimony for Public Hearing  
Education Committee  
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Karima A. Robinson, Ph.D.  
CT Decoding Dyslexia Supporter

**Senate Bill No. 317: An Act Concerning Dyslexia**

Good afternoon Members of the Education Committee. My name is Karima A. Robinson. I am an educator, administrator, and artist. I have over ten years of teaching experience at the college level and three years at the high school level. I currently tutor high school and elementary school students in the New Haven area. I have also tutored adults at Literacy Volunteers of Greater New Haven. Over the years, I have seen many students struggle with dyslexia. As a dyslexic adult myself and educator, I recognize the symptoms of dyslexia in my students. I am fortunate that I learned how to compensate for my disability early on. However, for those whose condition is more severe, if the interventions that we are requesting are not enacted, our education system will continue to fail our children. It is extremely frustrating to watch them struggle in classrooms with teachers who do not know how to teach dyslexic learners. Comprehensive teacher preparation is essential to improving the lives of 20% of the population who are dyslexic.

I support **Senate Bill No. 317: An Act Concerning Dyslexia** and am writing to ask that you consider an amendment that candidates seeking a remedial reading endorsement, complete a graduate level program aligned with evidence-based practices and the IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading. I am here today to ask you to consider the following issues as you draft this bill:

- Comprehensive teacher preparation using evidence based curriculum and content at the graduate level in Connecticut institutions of higher education. This will greatly improve literacy instruction for students with dyslexia.
- Teacher preparation must align with evidence based standards that are proven to be effective.
- IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading should be aligned with the Remedial Reading (102) Endorsement.

One course on dyslexia for teachers is not sufficient training to ensure that students will be correctly identified and taught effectively based on their distinctive learning style.

There is a wealth of evidence to confirm the correlation between dyslexia and low-reading levels, as well as poor reading levels and truancy. Truancy is a factor that often leads to school suspensions.

If you neglect special education needs, kids will act out... Kids are now getting the worst of both worlds. They are not getting the services they need and they are getting kicked out and getting into the justice system more often. *Connecticut Health Investigates Team. Prisons Try to Span Learning Gap. By Gail Braccidiferro MacDonald. August 4, 2001.*

Students who do not get the help they need will continue on a path that leads to low reading levels, behavior problems, truancy, expulsion, possible juvenile detention, and even adult incarceration. “90% of adult prisoners and youth detainees were never properly diagnosed as requiring special education services while they were in school (*Ibid*).” Make no mistake about it, undiagnosed and untreated dyslexia is a factor in the school to prison pipeline. Early identification of dyslexia in a child, necessary interventions, and referrals to special education services is more than an education issue. If we continue to ignore this issue, we are actively perpetuating the school to prison epidemic.

In New Haven County alone, 30% of the adult population is functionally illiterate. Last year 240 Literacy Volunteers tutored almost 1,400 adults in basic literacy skills. Most students they serve are functioning at the lower end of the spectrum, from kindergarten to fourth grade levels.

According to the U.S. Department of Education 60% of American’s prison inmates are illiterate and 85% of all juvenile offenders have reading difficulties. *The Importance of Remediating Dyslexia.* <http://www.specialeducationadvisor.com/the-importance-of-remediating-dyslexia/>

While the prevalence of dyslexia in the general population is about 20%, the prevalence of dyslexia in prisoners is more than twice that or 48%. *Scientific study conducted by Dr. K.C. Moody and colleagues at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Conjunction with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (2000).* <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10876375>

I recommend that **Senate Bill No. 317: An Act Concerning Dyslexia** provide essential training for teachers and educators in order for them to recognize the characteristics of dyslexia and intervene in the lives of our children to meet their special education needs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Karima A. Robinson, Ph.D.  
New Haven, CT