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Hello,

My name is Kate Farrell and I am 14-years-old. I live in Essex, CT and go to Valley Regional High School. I was diagnosed with dyslexia in August, 2015. I have struggled with reading and writing for my whole life, but with my diagnosis, the pieces are finally falling into place. I have been receiving special education since third grade, and although I had trouble with reading and writing, I was never tested for dyslexia. The reading strategies that I was taught by my special education teachers just didn't help me. Through the years I have felt frustrated and left out. While all of my friends were reading long novels and many books in a series, I struggled to get through books that were meant for students in lower grades. I get good grades, but have to work extra hard to keep up with my school work.

Once I was diagnosed, my parents asked our school system to help me with my dyslexia. Since there are no highly qualified people in our district, we had to go out-of-state to get someone to help me during school hours. Three days a week, I use Skype to get dyslexia tutoring from a Barton Reading tutor in Mississippi. My tutor is helping me learn many of the basic reading skills that I was missing. She is very structured and organized in the way that she presents her lessons. My tutor uses many techniques to help me learn including using blocks with word chunks and letters and helping me learn about how words are formed. Although I am grateful to be finally getting the help I need, I feel ashamed that I have to learn these basic skills as a ninth-grader. My dyslexia tutor is very encouraging and friendly, but I definitely wish that there was someone who could help me face-to-face.

I am proud to say that I have earned all A's so far this year. However, I have to work really hard to make up for my reading skills and to educate teachers about how to help me. I meet with my special education teacher in school, but she does not have any training in dyslexia education. This means that my parents and I have had to fight for every accommodation I receive.

I respectfully request that you support Senate Bill 317, but would like to request that the bill be changed to require reading or special education teachers to be fully trained in dyslexia education.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Thank you,

Kate Farrell