

My name is Kathi Loto, I am a parent of a student with Dyslexia and live in Hebron, CT. I am providing testimony concerning Senate Bill No. 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia. I respectfully request you amend this bill to include licensure and teacher preparation requirements, which will meet the literacy needs of ALL students, including those with Dyslexia.

My daughter, Ashley is an honors student currently in 10<sup>th</sup> grade at RHAM High School in Hebron. She was finally identified as dyslexic this school year, 2015.

Since Ashley was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, I kept telling the elementary school that something was “not right” with her learning and that she could not spell. I was told that she was a good, well behaved student and that she could always use spell check. I also reported that she had difficulty with writing and they again said she was fine.

By the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade there was a huge discrepancy between her class work, homework and test scores that indicated a disconnect of some kind. Ashley would study for days for a test/quiz and the grade would not reflect her hard work. I approached her teachers, set up meetings and no one recognized an issue or offered any suggestions. Ashley spent a lot of time crying and calling herself “stupid” and “dumb” of which she is neither! No one in the elementary school, middle school or high school knew how much she was truly struggling. No one took our concerns seriously.

When I learned that I had rights as a parent to request testing she was ending 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We hired an educational consultant to advocate for Ashley. The tests identified her as dyslexic. We have learned that she is so intelligent that she had developed her own ways of compensating. She has always been an A/B student in honors classes.

The school district did not want to identify her as dyslexic even with all the testing supporting this identification. They said she was an “enigma”. After 3 PPTs, that went nowhere, she was identified and in order to receive services is now special education. The district is so ill prepared to identify a dyslexic student as described above, but once identified that cannot provide the services to educate her. They offered an honors student “Life Skills” and “reading class” which we refused because they do not meet her needs. We requested the Wilson Program. The district does not have anyone trained and after much run around, our educational consult found a teacher outside of the RHAM district who was willing to work with Ashley using the Wilson Program.

The case managers (teacher) from Special Ed are not able to work efficiently with Ashley at an honors level and our requests for a case manager who knows Ashley and the demands on an honor student, have been denied. She had a case manager who was supposed to give her English vocabulary quizzes verbally but could not pronounce the words and did not know the definitions. Also the case manager was unreliable giving her the quizzes in a timely fashion. They also kept mentioning “co-taught” classes and did not realize that is not done in Level 1/Honors classes.

After the identification I had to contact each teacher and meet with them to discuss the identification and the impact it has on her learning. They teachers are not educated to teach or modify their teaching to Ashley. For example: Her honors algebra 2 teacher this year said that she was in the wrong classes and should drop down. She also said she should get a tutor for math and her “learning disability”. No teacher should react that way to a student no matter what the disability.

Thankfully, Ashley is a good student and some of her teachers have taken the time to help her. Ashley has been learning how she “learns” and is trying get help from teachers that need their own education on dyslexia.

It has been a long journey with a lot of tears and frustration. I am very frustrated with a school system that is not prepared to work with dyslexic students. I have had to fight for everything. They tell me that they have “12 other dyslexic students” – what are they doing for them???? If they truly are educating dyslexic students than we should not have to fight for Ashley to be properly educated because they should already have a program in place.

The help Ashley and other dyslexic students there needs to be early identification and appropriate educational services which starts with educated teachers.