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Testimony re. Senate Bill No. 317

My name is Marc Hoffman, I am an educator and advocate, I live in Stamford. 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 align with best practices, as outlined within the IDA Knowledge & Practice Standards, so we may meet the literacy needs of ALL students, including those with Dyslexia.

I am the owner of Hoffman Education, Strong Start Early Care & Education and Marc Hoffman Educational Consulting. I serve as Board Chair of Eye to Eye, the only national mentoring movement that pairs kids who have learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (LD / ADHD) with college and high school mentors who have been similarly labeled. I'm a Learning Disability Advocate and dyslexic. My experiences with dyslexia have led me to the work I do today. I wake up every day with the goal of helping ensure that all children receive an appropriate education.

While the occurrence of dyslexia in the overall population is about 20%, the prevalence of dyslexia in prisons is more than twice that, or 48% according to a scientific study that took place in 2000. Many of these incarcerated men are great entrepreneurs but they are starting the wrong kind of businesses.

Unfortunately, teachers getting their degrees are not being given the proper tools to meet the needs of students with Dyslexia. As evidenced by CT reading scores, Institutions of Higher Education are not adequately preparing our teachers to teach reading to students with Dyslexia. I find that teachers are motivated to help children with dyslexia but feel unprepared to do so.

When adequate teacher preparation is implemented, the cost savings related to dyslexia will be seen by school districts along with for families. Many Districts, when unable to provide an appropriate education, bear the cost of outplacement of the student. Parents have also taken a financial hit with costs for tutors, testing, and outplacements. Furthermore, the academic trauma experienced by children dyslexia will decrease when teachers are able to detect and then teach reading to them.

The dyslexia movement's interest is not to label children but to ensure that all educators have at least a basic understanding of dyslexia. For starters, this is required on the part of teachers because they are the ones directly dealing with children and they need to know

the characteristics, symptoms, of dyslexia. Empirical evidence demonstrates that dyslexia is a physiological reality and not simply developmental. The treatment approach used in some CT schools is not addressing the phonemic awareness issue.

Even though dyslexia is a disability that is recognized and is covered under provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, I still see too many children dealing with educational trauma because they are misunderstood. In many cases they are not given the resources to remediate their challenges with reading. By definition, to be dyslexic, you have to have at least average intelligence. With that in mind, many children with dyslexia are brilliant but being marginalized and not given the chance to reach their potential. We are losing the next Steven Spielberg, Charles Schwab, Will Smith and even the next Albert Einstein, all Dyslexics, because no matter how smart they are, in many cases, when children constantly experience academic failure because their learning environment does not understand their cognitive profiles, they stop trying. Society needs people that think differently and tackle problems in a creative way, characteristics of many dyslexics.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. I welcome any questions or comments that you may have.

Respectfully,

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