

My name is Susan LeClair Sharp, I live in Bristol, CT, and I have been a special educator since 1978. For the past 18 years, I have been the Education Director at Ben Bronz Academy in West Hartford, CT, an approved private special education program for students with learning disabilities. I hold an earned doctorate in special education from the University of Connecticut, as well as a number of teaching certificates. I am here to add my voice in support of Senate Bill 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia. However, I urge you to go beyond the current proposal.

We need appropriate interventions in our teacher preparation programs on the identification of this disability and the understanding of the special interventions that are needed. We need recognition of the research-based, scientifically validated curriculum and instructional practices that have shown to be effective in helping those with dyslexia learn to read and write, to overcome and to compensate for their learning challenges.

Over my career I have heard countless times that dyslexia cannot be diagnosed before a certain age; that all reading disabilities are the same, and that direct instruction is unnecessary. Based on my professional training and experience over the past 35 years, I believe these are myths that must be dispelled. I have been fortunate to be part of a very effective program that works with students with dyslexia, and am proud to report that, with the right intervention, these students can and do move on to graduate from college and secure employment in a wide diversity of career areas.

This pathway to success begins with identification and appropriate intervention. I urge the members of this committee to pass SB 317, and to amend this bill to align ALL remedial reading coursework with research-based scientifically validated curriculum and instructional practices, as "a course" in Dyslexia is not sufficient.

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