

To: The Committee on Education

Senate Bill 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia

Appropriate Evidence Based and Best Practices for reading, spelling, and writing for all students including students with Dyslexia needs to be developed within a remedial reading course work plan. The International Dyslexia Association has developed *Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading* that is based on the science of reading and applies for all students including those with Dyslexia. The *Standards* have been adopted by states and districts throughout our country. Students with Dyslexia also require a *Multisensory Structured Language Approach* applied to the Standards and should also be included in the Higher Education, Special Education coursework. This training for regular and special education should be happening in all of our Institutes of Higher Education and not as Professional Development or In-service within our schools.

The term “dyslexia” was coined in Germany in the early 1800s and appropriate instruction for reading, spelling, and writing disabilities was developed in the 1920s. How reading and spelling are processed in brain functions has been researched more than any other topic including medicine. Studies using FMRI have provided evidence that reading and spelling are accomplished by connecting sounds to letter symbols and letter symbols to sounds with the two processes integrating together to read and spell words. Yet this solid evidence has typically been ignored and Guided Reading and Balanced Literacy have been the predominant methods to teach reading with Literacy Coaches trained to use these methodologies rather than Evidence Based or Best Practices. Furthermore, Connecticut teacher colleges are not required to offer courses in reading instruction that has proven to work for close to 100 years. Children are expected to read by the end of Kindergarten even though many are not developmentally ready until mid first grade. These are the important issues that the State Department of Education should implement into our schools.

I have seen this suffering personally because I have taught students since the early 1960s, began a business (Learning House) in the 1980s with the mission to teach individuals with dyslexia/learning disabilities and train teachers to effectively use the Orton-Gillingham Approach designed for individuals with dyslexia/reading disabilities. I have also consulted and trained teachers in a multitude of schools throughout Connecticut. I have taught the Orton-Gillingham Approach, a multisensory structured language approach, to teachers who then experienced success with their students, yet often do not have administrative support to

continue with an approach that includes “phonics.” Viable programs, such as the *Wilson Reading System, Foundations*, and *Preventing Academic Failure* are purchased with good intentions, yet either no in-service follows or the training does not allow for a practicum for teachers to learn how to implement the program effectively.

For all the reasons mentioned above, I am making a heartfelt plea that the Connecticut State Department of Education develops appropriate coursework for teacher preparation within our Institutes of Higher Education Evidence Based and Best Practice instruction so all children will learn to read, spell, and write.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Santora, M.S., F/AOGPE      Clinical Director, Learning House, Guilford, CT