

Theresa Collins  
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Southport, CT 06890

March 15, 2017

Re: HB 7254

To the Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Theresa Collins, and I live in Easton, Connecticut. I fully support HB 7254, An Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to Complete a Program of Study in Evidence-Based Structured Literacy Interventions for Students with Dyslexia. I submit my testimony as an educator who has worked with dyslexic children for the past 30 years. This is my written testimony, and I will not be testifying at the hearing.

I have devoted my entire professional life to working with children with dyslexia and now find myself honored to be working with their families and their teachers as well. I am a teacher trained in using the Orton-Gillingham approach, a structured literacy approach that has shown historically to be one of the best strategies for teaching literacy to children with dyslexia. I have been privileged to see hundreds of my students graduate from high school and become valuable members of society. I have also been privileged to become a teacher trainer. As a Fellow of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators ([www.ortonacademy.org](http://www.ortonacademy.org)), I train teachers in the Orton-Gillingham approach; time and again, those teachers have affirmed how valuable the training is to them and how many more children they could have helped if they had received the training when they were in teacher training programs. I am currently mentoring more than 20 teachers who have devoted their own time and money to receive this training in order to help their students, but the need is so much greater. Early intervention is the best way to reach those students, before they have had time to fail and be stigmatized by the effects of an education that does not meet the needs of their differently abled processing styles. Teacher training is one of the most valuable gifts we can provide to our children, who, after all, are our future.

I am in full support of the call of HB 7254 for a "Program of Study" in Dyslexia for special educators within Institutes of Higher Education; for teacher preparation for special educators with evidence-based structured literacy, along with a requirement for supervised practicum hours, which is critical; and, to allow for special education teachers to receive Dyslexia training as pre-service teacher candidates, before they graduate and reach our local school districts. Those steps are essential to meet the critical needs of students with Dyslexia and would benefit all learners in the State of Connecticut.

It is with a great sense of urgency that I respectfully request that you pass HB 7254. It is only through the use of the evidence-based approaches coupled with the right training and practicum experiences that we will see changes in reading outcomes in our schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Name