

My name is Michelle Cubanski, I live in Woodbridge, 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.

About four years ago, my oldest son Ward was beginning to show signs of his struggles with learning to read. Ward had been receiving special education services since preschool. I approached Ward's 1st grade teacher and special education teacher with my concerns. I asked them if Ward could have Dyslexia. Ward's 1st grade teacher was silent. His special education teacher responded, "No". I asked why was Dyslexia not a possibility. She stated that Ward does not write his letters backwards. (This is not an identifying factor of Dyslexia.)

Ward has since been diagnosed with Severe Dyslexia and other learning disabilities. I cannot begin to express in enough words, the hurdles that my husband and I have had to jump over for our child. We have had to make countless calls and send numerous letters to the school asking for help, which often went ignored and unanswered. We have had to spend thousands of dollars of our own money to get him the help he needs. This includes hiring outside tutors, evaluators and transporting him for those appointments. We finally had to hire a lawyer to get our son the services that he is entitled under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Ward was so far behind entering 3rd grade (Kindergarten level), I had to withdraw him from public school and place him in a private special education school.

When my youngest son at the end of Kindergarten last year and the beginning of first grade this school year started to show signs of Dyslexia, I panicked. I brought my concerns to his teachers. The reading teacher observed his reading and determined that he was not showing signs of Dyslexia. Again I was discouraged by the school's lack of knowledge about Dyslexia, so I hired a psychologist in the community who specialized in learning disabilities. After spending \$4,500 on the evaluation, we received our confirmation, Jack did indeed have Dyslexia too.

After presenting the report, the school questioned Jack's diagnosis and expressed their doubts. The speech language therapist was vocal in her disagreement as well as the special education teacher. The two professional who should be able to help my son the most lacked the very basic knowledge about Dyslexia.

Jack does not qualify for special education at this time because he is not failing yet. I was assured that as the reading becomes harder Jack's strategies to compensate for his disability will no longer work. So like Ward we wait to get the right services, unfortunately we will have to wait till he falls far behind before the school helps us.

So as a parent, I cannot let Jack suffer in silence. I will be finding him a tutor to hopefully prevent the suffering.

To this day it still amazes me that teachers do not have knowledge about the most prevalent learning disability in the world. 1 in 5 people have Dyslexia.

I hope that requiring special education teachers to obtain this training will begin the hard work necessary to finally help our Dyslexic children get the acknowledgement and support they so deserve and need.

Thank you for listening to my family's story.