

Testimony HB 7254- “An Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to Complete a Program of Study in Evidence-Based Structured Literacy Interventions for Students with Dyslexia”

Dear Education Committee:

March 10, 2017

I am a Bethel, CT resident, Orton-Gillingham Associate Level Practitioner, reading specialist with my 102 and 097 certifications, and a special educator currently working in a Connecticut middle school. As such, I fully support House Bill 7254, “An Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to Complete a Program of Study in Evidence-Based Structured Literacy Interventions for Students with Dyslexia”.

Over the course of 25 years, I’ve worked closely with dyslexic students in six states, received my bachelor’s degree in special education at Penn State University (1980), and my master’s degree in reading along with my #102 and #097 certifications from Southern Connecticut State University (2006). Even with my vast experience, years of graduate work, and the ease at which testing and analyzing student data comes naturally to me; I knew that I needed additional training enabling me to deliver effective structured literacy instruction. Graduate programs did not offer such coursework at the time I was seeking my graduate degree. Fortunately, my district stepped in and financially supported my OG training.

With financial deficits plaguing public school systems across Connecticut, it’s not possible for schools to solely take on the burden of educating staff to deliver structured literacy instruction. Our higher level educational systems must begin the process of comprehensively training their educators. This can occur by offering a complete program of study in evidence-based structured literacy intervention. Then, these future graduates will become the catalyst for change within districts across the state.

Many hard-working teachers are tasked with evaluating and providing structured literacy interventions, yet are ill equipped to do so. I know this to be true because I have personally assisted many parents of dyslexic children (from various districts across the state) to fight for structured literacy instruction for their children. These parents, whose children range from kindergarten to grade 8, have fought tirelessly advocating for their children all the while feeling frustrated and defeated by the status quo. I am just one educator in a sea of educators that work with dyslexic students every day. There are too few of us adequately trained to evaluate and deliver evidence-based structured literacy interventions effectively to this target population. You can change this dynamic by passing HB- 7254.

Research has proven that one in five students have some degree of dyslexia. Many are not being identified and certainly not receiving evidence-based structured literacy interventions from a qualified instructor. These children continue to struggle with increasing text demands, without the tools and accommodations to be successful.

The time to act is NOW! Let's work together to make this happen! Don't let another year go by before our dyslexic children are provided with appropriate effective research-based instruction they so desperately need to address their reading deficits. You have the power to make a positive difference in the lives of thousands of dyslexic students across our state.

Respectfully Submitted,

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