

My name is Christine Fernald. I am the parent of two children with dyslexia. We live in Avon, Connecticut. I am writing today because 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.

One in five students have Dyslexia. It is a neurobiological learning difference that can effect even the brightest of students. This learning disability effects 20% of the general population and represents 80% of the special education population. Dyslexic students learn and process information differently. Their educators must know how to teach them effectively. Unfortunately, I hear too many stories of dyslexia red flags missed at all grade levels. All teachers must be trained in Dyslexia to ensure dyslexic students are identified and that FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) is provided. It is best to effectively intervene early with research based special education techniques, when remediation is most effective, easier to attain, and before unnecessary emotional damage is done to these children that just learn differently. However even if it is identified late all dyslexic students, at any grade level, can learn to effectively read, write and spell. Attaining literacy for all dyslexic students requires multi-sensory, explicit instruction provided with fidelity by a highly trained and experienced teacher.

Currently all classroom educators, SRBI and special education teachers are required to participate in a general in-service designed to raise Dyslexia awareness. I believe this training is essential for all teachers, in all subjects and at all grade levels. Dyslexia affects more than just learning to read and write. Dyslexia affects all language functions. Therefore dyslexia can negatively impact a student's ability to perform successfully in each and every classroom, even in the honors or AP classroom. Dyslexic students may have difficulty with a plethora of academic activities including: reading and writing musical notes in band or chorus, learning the spelling of new science vocabulary, following multiple-step directions in physical education, memorizing rote math facts, and/or learning a foreign language when one has yet to master their native language of English. Dyslexic students are not lazy or stupid, but instead desperately need their teachers' help and academic support. (I believe in-service dyslexia training for all teachers should not be eliminated by the proposed SB 953.)

Today I am writing because 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. Special education teachers need more, specific training in dyslexia. They must possess appropriate knowledge and resources to meet their dyslexic students unique learning needs. HB 7254 calls for a program of study in dyslexia for special educators within the Institutes of Higher Education. This would align teacher preparation for special educators with evidence- based structured literacy. Supervised practicum hours are also critical to teacher preparation and should be required. HB 7254 allows special education teachers to receive Dyslexia training as pre-service teacher candidates, before they graduate and reach our local school districts. Please support HB 7254, as it is currently written, because it is essential to meet the critical needs of the most vulnerable students with Dyslexia. HB 7254 is necessary to ensure appropriate Dyslexia training for all educators at every educational tier!

Dyslexics have great potential for success but they need their teachers' help to achieve. When students with dyslexia receive appropriate education they can flourish and soar. Did you know that 35% of entrepreneurs are dyslexic? Were you aware that 40% of self-made millionaires have dyslexia? Are you cognizant that 50% of NASA employees are dyslexic? Do not allow dyslexic potential to remain locked. When students with dyslexia are not provided FAPE the negative consequences for the student, their family and society are astounding. 35% of dyslexic students never graduate from high school. Dyslexics make up 50% of the juvenile detention system. 60% of adolescents in drug and alcohol rehabilitation are dyslexic. ([www.noticeability.com](http://www.noticeability.com)) Please help dyslexic students become blessings to our great state of Connecticut and not burdens to society and their families. Support and unlock dyslexic potential by backing HB 7254.

Again, I fully support HB 7254.

*This is my written testimony and I will not be testifying at the hearing.*

Christine Fernald  
Avon, CT