

**Testimony of Dr. Margie B. Gillis,
President of Literacy How and Research Affiliate at Haskins Laboratories and Fairfield University
Raised Bill 7254
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Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg, and Members of the Education Committee, I am presenting this testimony to respectfully request that you support Raised Bill 7254, **An Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to Complete a Program of Study in Evidence-based Structured Literacy Interventions for Students with Dyslexia.**

Many of you have heard me present testimony related to reading and dyslexia over the years and some of you may recall that my teaching roots are in special education. Before turning my attention to professional development of teachers focused on reading, I spent 15 years working with students who struggled learning to read. The more students I taught, the more I realized how complex reading is and how ill-prepared most teachers are to teach children to read. You might be able to infer that I, unlike many teachers, love the theory and research that support teaching practices. In fact, I often err on the side of presenting TOO much theory – much to the chagrin of the teachers who are subjected to my workshops and presentations – because I firmly believe that teachers need to understand the theory in order to translate it effectively in the classroom. But according to Joyce and Showers’ research, the transfer of new knowledge to classroom instruction requires **a combination** of theoretical knowledge, demonstration of best practice by skilled teachers, time to practice, and supervised coaching.

I fully support *Raised Bill 7254 An Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to Complete a Program of Study in Evidence-based Structured Literacy Interventions for Students with Dyslexia.* It includes specific language that speaks to the need for special education teachers to complete a program of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts **that includes supervised practicum** hours and instruction in the **detection and recognition of evidence-based structured literacy interventions** for students with dyslexia. This is so very important! I recently presented testimony that spoke to the lack of knowledge on general educators’ part regarding comprehensive literacy instruction. I want to emphasize that this lack of knowledge is pervasive across the field of education and includes special educators – the very teachers who are responsible for providing remediation for those students who struggle with reading the most, including students identified with dyslexia.

A graduate level program of study must reflect evidence-based structured literacy principles and practices **and include supervised practice experiences to support candidates’ ability to successfully implement systematic, explicit, direct, multi-sensory, structured literacy interventions in reading, writing, and spelling for students who require remedial reading interventions, including students with Dyslexia.**

Again, I thank you for your commitment to our students – especially those who need qualified special education teachers who have the knowledge and expertise to ensure that they master the most important skill they will ever learn – knowing how to read!