

## Written Testimony for Bill HB 7254

My name is Jessica Glassman. I live in Orange, Connecticut. I fully support of Bill HB 7254, An Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to Complete a Program of Study in Evidence-Based Structured Literacy Intervention for students with dyslexia. I am a mother of a dyslexic child and an elementary teacher. I have spent countless hours fighting for my son to receive a free and appropriate education at his public school. He struggled through kindergarten, first, second and third grade. Some teachers tried to help him but he wasn't making adequate progress due to their lack of knowledge on how to work with a dyslexic student. If I left the school alone, he would have continued to flounder through school and been pushed along. My bright child felt stupid and couldn't read what his friends enjoyed. By fourth grade my child was given a one-to-one teacher who was trained in Orton Gillingham. This trained professional was hired from outside the district because they didn't have anyone trained to properly deliver this specialized instruction. He was also given an iPad and audio books. This wasn't easy to get for him; it took a complaint placed at the state level to get my son what he needed to be successful. Having a proper intervention, trained professional and access to print through audio books opened a door for my child. He started to respond to his intervention and reading using audio books became enjoyable. Unfortunately, the team of teachers working with my son in school didn't understand his disability. While the intervention was working, school was still a miserable place. Untrained teachers were ignorant to my son's needs on a day to day basis. If the teachers were properly trained to understand his disability, they might have understood my son's struggles. He had a special education teacher that made it clear that she felt it was my son's behavior not disability that was impacting his progress in school. Even with an outside diagnosis of dyslexia, the teachers didn't want to believe that if they changed their teaching, he would respond to instruction. Instead they blamed my son for his failures. Despite his negative experiences in school, the Orton Gillingham was working. Unfortunately, fifth grade didn't get any better. Untrained teachers caused more anxiety for my son. At my son's PPT, I asked for the new dyslexia box to be checked instead of just leaving learning disabled on his IEP. The special education teacher stated that she didn't feel it was appropriate. This was proof that she didn't believe he was dyslexic because she didn't understand dyslexia. My son was not lazy or stupid, like the fourth and fifth grade teachers wanted me to believe. My son was bright, creative and very motivated to learn. His motivation was starting to dwindle because he was continually being beaten down by his teachers. The professionals who are supposed to be the caring, well-educated adults, were doing more harm than good. These elementary school years would have been different if the teachers were properly trained in dyslexia. My son's last year in elementary school was much better. He had a new special education teacher who has some training and knowledge about dyslexia. His teachers received ongoing training from the special education teacher. My son went from what the teachers called a behavior problem to a happy, well behaved student. His sixth grade teacher even told me at conferences to my son was one of the best behaved in class. While my son still struggled in school, the change in teacher attitude made all the difference in his day to day learning. Now that my child is in middle school, we are faced with the same issues as before. Untrained teachers try to provide remediation but are not successful. The middle school is a regional district and did not continue with the Orton Gillingham intervention that was successfully catching my son up to grade level that was implemented in the elementary school. The middle school now provides their form of mixed interventions. My son continues to work hard but the lack of knowledge about dyslexia from the teachers is causing him to regress. Please pass Bill HB 7254 which would require training for special education teachers. My son is proof that a well-

trained teacher makes progress with dyslexic children but an untrained teacher causes regression.