

March 15, 2017

Good Afternoon Co-Chairs: Senator Boucher, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, Representative Lavielle and other members of the Education Committee. My name is Harvey Hubble, I live in Litchfield, Connecticut. I am in 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.

Our Special Education Teachers should receive the required training that will support all struggling readers. HB 7254 calls for a "Program of Study" in Dyslexia, for Special Educators within Institutes of Higher Education, which is needed. I was amazed to find out this was not already a requirement. Districts should not have to pay for this training, this should be taught in college.

HB 7254 aligns teacher preparation for special educators with evidence-based structured literacy, along with a requirement for supervised practicum hours, which is critical. This has been proven to work with Dyslexic students and all struggling readers.

HB 7254 will allow special Education teachers to receive Dyslexia training as pre-service teacher candidates, before they graduate and reach our local school districts. HB 7254 is essential to meet the critical needs of students with Dyslexia.

I am one of 45-63 million Americans who have dyslexia. I will never forget my challenges in school when trying to learn to read, write and do math like all of the other students. At age seven I was diagnosed as "dyslexic" but back then that did not mean a whole lot. In the 1960's-1970's, educators did not know how to handle students with learning differences. I remember my teachers having a private meeting about me. "He can barely write his first name," said Mrs. B. "I noticed he doesn't know how to hold his pencil," said Mrs. W. They didn't know I was listening, or maybe they did and didn't care.

Little was known back then about what to do with a dyslexic student. Testing continued on me, year after year. Testing never ends when you are dyslexic. I learned to read outside of the school system through a series of one-on-one tutors. In 1977 I graduated from Newtown High School. My class rank was 275 out of 325 students. Perhaps I should add that I just barely graduated.

During one of my attempts to go to college, it was confirmed that I was not college material. My English professor excused me from class permanently when he learned that correct spelling and grammar didn't exist in my writing. My ideas were not judged, but my lack of structure in writing was. "Those skills should have been learned prior to entering college classes! You may be excused now, Mr. Hubbell," he grumped. Years later, it became apparent to me that I was born at the wrong time to get help with dyslexia in school. It wasn't until 1975, a few years before I graduated from high school,

that the first laws were passed to identify students with learning disabilities and to support their rights to education. It was too late for me. At sixteen years old I was already considered damaged goods. I felt that my teachers and others did not understand me. If I had been born later, maybe I would not have had to go through all of the pain and struggles that I experienced in school.

Dyslexics commonly feel alone in their struggles in learning because more often than not, they are expected to learn like the other students. However this does not work so the dyslexic child gets further and further behind and self-confidence suffers. Unfortunately, not all schools in the US currently recognize dyslexia as a specific learning disability or even know what is. A dyslexic's fate really depends on the school district in which they live in, the parents and/or advocates, and the teachers. That is why HB 7254 is so important. It gives our teachers a chance to change the fate of our states many dyslexic students.

If teachers are given the correct tools to identify specific learning differences in their students they can help to insure that the students are put on a path for success. Defining dyslexia is an important tool in this tool box. Defining dyslexia, as the HB 7254 requires, validates a child's learning difference. From there, the correct the educational plan can be created to help the child succeed and even flourish in Connecticut's education system.

Early screening and identification are another important part of creating a successful dyslexic. I was lucky enough to be diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of 7, but I was born at the wrong time to benefit from it. Growing up in Newtown, my teachers didn't know what to do with me. My parents had to reach out in to the community and find tutors to teach me to read.

Now, if a child is lucky enough to be diagnosed with dyslexia early on, there are years of evidence based research to aid in their educational journey. Whether it's through multi-sensory instruction, assistive technology, one-on-one tutoring or a structured language approach, with assistance from their advocate, a child can find the correct form of education to best fit their specific needs.

Please pass HB 7254, Special Education teachers need a program of study in Dyslexia within Higher Education, I know that it would have benefited me 50 years ago, I hope that it has the chance to do that for Connecticut's dyslexic children today. You have the power to change their fate and create a positive educational experience for all of our states dyslexic students.

As a resident in the State of Connecticut, I request your support of the Dyslexia legislation.

Respectfully,

Harvey Hubbell V

Filmmaker, Advocate, Dyslexic

Dislecksia: The Movie
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