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Re: HB 7254

To the Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Cathy Irwin , and I live in New Canaan, Connecticut. 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. I submit my testimony as an Orton Gillingham trained educator who has worked with dyslexic children for the past 12 years.

When I first started working with children who had fallen behind in reading, they were (and still are) not always dyslexic. Often, they simply need the direct reading and spelling instruction I provide, which is sequential, incremental, and cumulative. It is a systematic and structured approach to teaching our language that all teachers could benefit from learning, especially Special Ed teachers.

I am in full support of the call of HB 7254 for a "Program of Study" in Dyslexia for special educators within Institutes of Higher Education; for teacher preparation for special educators with evidence-based structured literacy, along with a requirement for supervised practicum hours, which is critical; and, to allow for special education teachers to receive Dyslexia training as pre-service teacher candidates, before they graduate and reach our local school districts. Those steps are essential to meet the critical needs of students with Dyslexia and would benefit all learners in the State of Connecticut.

It is with a great sense of urgency that I respectfully request that you pass HB 7254. It is only through the use of the evidence-based approaches coupled with the right training and practicum experiences that we will see changes in reading outcomes in our schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Catharine K. Irwin