

March 13, 2017

Good Afternoon Co-Chairs: Senator Boucher, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and other members of the Education Committee. My name is Cindy Pokoj, I live in New Milford, 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.

My granddaughter, Zoey Howard, was diagnosed with Dyslexia a few years ago. On the surface, she looks like any normal child with an incredibly bright future. But then you discover she has a learning disability that may prevent her from achieving all the greatness she desires.

As I've learned of many successful men and women who are Dyslexic, I realize Zoey may very well muddle through school and do great things. But what I've also learned is that for many with Dyslexia, who have achieved a level of success, it was a painful and humiliating path to reach their goals. In this age of enlightenment, Zoey, and any other child with Dyslexia, should be afforded the best education offered to every child in the State of Connecticut – or anywhere for that matter.

Knowing a child will struggle with any disability is heart-wrenching enough, and as a society, we should do all we can to help every child become all they can be. So it was most disheartening to learn that Connecticut school systems are ill equipped to provide adequate education to children with Dyslexia, and even more disturbing that educators are not qualified or trained to recognize and deal with this learning disability.

As a result of CT public schools inability to provide proper training for Zoey, she had to be enrolled in a special school out of state causing undue stress and financial burden on her parents.

I'm optimistic that the lawmakers for the State of Connecticut will support and continue to ensure the best possible education for **all** children, including those with Dyslexia.

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

Respectfully,

Cindy Pokoj
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