

Benjamin Powers
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214 Main St.
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March 14, 2017

Re: HB 7254

To the Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Benjamin Powers, and I live and work in Fairfield, 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 from four different perspectives: as a student who struggled in elementary school with reading, as an educator who has worked with dyslexic children for the past seventeen years, as a parent of a first grader and a third grader enrolled in a Connecticut public school, and as researcher, who has spent considerable time investigating the self-efficacy perceptions of students with dyslexia and appropriate reading intervention strategies.

As someone who has taught students with dyslexia and runs a specialized school for that same population, I have witnessed the significant results that the right type of training and evidence-based approaches have on the success of students learning to read. We enroll many students who have failed at reading in public schools, and, for many of them, within a short period of time, we are able to help them achieve significant gains in reading, often getting them to or above grade level. There is no secret recipe to our work: we use evidence-based approaches validated by the research community, and we train our teachers properly. It would behoove the committee to consider enacting those same standards, i.e., implementing evidence-based training and a substantial amount of it, along with mentorship and practicum experiences, so that public schools could affect the same outcome we see in our independent school model. Let the state of Connecticut be a leader in best-practices for the dyslexic community as well as for literacy instruction.

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,



Benjamin N. Powers
Headmaster