

The following is my written testimony and I will not be testifying at the hearing.

My name is Kit Savage and I reside in Darien CT. I support HB bill 7254: An Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to Complete a Program of Study in Evidence-Based Structured Literacy Interventions for Students with Dyslexia.

I support HB 7254 because it calls for a “program of study” in the language based, learning disability of Dyslexia within the Institutes of Higher Education.

There is no excuse for legislators to continue to ignore that their public school system is perpetuating a cycle of failing students with Dyslexia. Parents know that teachers continue to exit higher education teacher programs unskilled in providing students with dyslexia with the adequate intensive instruction required to close the achievement gap with their typical peers.

I support that HB 7254 is vital because it provides special education teachers with instruction in the science of reading... before they reach the local public schools.

It doesn't take an educator or an advanced degree to see why a program of study in Structured Literacy is a basic and fundamental requirement to start to build up parent confidence that all teachers - and particularly that special educators, have the tools they need to properly instruct struggling students with dyslexia.

HB725 is a bill that is a sad bill because it is so long overdue. I am the parent of two children with Dyslexia. I know that had ANY of their six special educators in elementary school been skilled in teaching reading, my children would not have suffered as they did. They suffered extreme losses of instructional time and they lost irreplaceable time participating in the general ed classroom.

The financial costs of educating my children would have been dramatically reduced as well. The truth is the vast majority of parents want to have their dyslexic children educated in their local public schools. The established pattern of school Administrators refusing to acknowledge that their special educators are unable to implement a scientifically based program sets up an adversarial battle between parents their local school district. I also imagine there is a genuine and pervasive sense of discouragement among these special teachers who are being charged with a nearly impossible task. It erodes their credibility once parents understand the level of reading instruction required to ensure their child does not continue to fail in general education.

I ask my legislators to think...how could teachers provide systematic, scientifically based instruction when they have never received any education in what those interventions require of them? This fundamental failure creates a huge and widening chasm as parents are forced to become adversarial to get to the truth of the matter. What instruction does it take to remediate their child's Dyslexia? Fortunately the answers are easily found. So I expect my legislators to wonder why it is taking so long for higher education to move upon the research and do their part to exit educators who are adequately trained?

Please pass this bill because we owe it to the students who are struggling on a daily basis in our schools, failing to read. We owe it to them and society has to stem the tide of failures to educate our kids appropriately. To uphold that all schools must have special educators who are properly skilled to provide their students with appropriate, intensive instructions deemed essential for their child.

I appreciate your attention to this very serious matter and look forward to a time when having Dyslexia in public school is not such a stigmatizing, negative waste of time that it is now.

Regards,
Kit Savage