

March 13, 2017

Good afternoon Co-Chairs: Senator Boucher, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and other members of the Education Committee:

My name is Kathleen Stewart, a resident of Kent, CT, and 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.

In my professional life, I serve as Director of Language Training at a private school for dyslexic students. I am a trained Orton-Gillingham practitioner and a Fellow in Training of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners & Educators. **I have experienced first hand the difference that a structured approach to literacy can make. It is the difference between continued failure and finally cracking the code. It is the difference between continued struggle and the achievement of fluent reading. It is critical that all special education teachers be versed in research based, cumulative, explicit, multi-sensory approaches to reading and writing.** Our students deserve no less. There simply is no other effective way to teach students with language based learning disabilities.

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

Respectfully,

Kathleen Stewart