

Dear Legislators,

My name is John Theisen from Milford, CT and I write today in support of HB7254. HB7254, an Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to Complete a Program of Study in Evidence-Based Structured Literacy Interventions for Students with Dyslexia is long overdue.

In 2015, I submitted testimony in support of PA 15-97 which was passed unanimously by the Education Committee, House of Representatives and the Senate. In 2015 everyone recognized the need and legitimacy for having educators trained in helping those with Dyslexia.

As a parent of a dyslexic student I urge you to pass legislation that would require higher education to properly prepare future special education teachers. This requirement would ensure that Connecticut's students get the education they deserve and prevent others from going through what our family has. My daughter was passed through the system until we retained an attorney. At that point the district went from saying she was age appropriate to offering fifteen hours of service weekly. Unfortunately by that point the damage was done. She became school avoidant, and my once outgoing daughter was now shy and withdrawn and had low self-esteem. At great fiscal and emotional expense my wife and I removed her from the public school and fought the long battle to get her placed at a special education school where she could receive the education she deserved. If my daughter had received early intervention and quality instruction she might have been able to stay in the local school district.

As a teacher it makes me question what I am expected to focus on for my students. There is a long list of mandatory trainings I am required to attend at the expense of instructional time. While I understand it is important to educate the whole child it seems counterintuitive to give educators the specific training that gets to the very heart of the matter. Every teacher should receive dyslexia training. I can tell you first hand that I see many students who are struggling with reading, not just those with dyslexia. With proper training we can reverse this trend. The students of Connecticut deserve it.

John Theisen - Milford