

## Written Testimony - HB 7254 - Owen Wood, Southington, CT

Good morning members of the committee. My name is Owen Wood and I am dyslexic. I am in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I am here on behalf of myself, my brother Noah and all dyslexic students. I support HB 7254.

I was diagnosed with dyslexia in third grade. I was failing miserably and I felt depressed and really stupid. I didn't want to go to school. When I was in special education, it felt like my teachers didn't know how to help me. No matter how many hours a week I went, I was still falling behind on grade levels in reading. After I transferred to another school in fourth grade, I met Mr. Cop. He was trained in the Wilson reading program. He made me work hard, but I gained reading levels. I felt smarter. Mr. Cop understood my dyslexic brain and would talk to me about how my brain worked. At the end of the year, Mr. Cop left the District. The next year, I came back to school and there was a new special ed teacher. She didn't understand me or how my brain works. She treated me like I couldn't do anything. It made me feel stupid again. I fell behind several reading levels. I couldn't keep up in class. I felt hopeless and like I would never learn to read.

Last year my parents put me in private school. All my teachers are trained in special education and reading disabilities. I have to work really hard, but it's worth it. It's amazing how small classes and the right kind of teaching can help you learn to read, write, and spell. In my first year at my new school I made over two years of growth in reading. This year I am still at that school and I am reading on grade level. I love to read Rick Riordan's books about a dyslexic child named Percy Jackson. I read every night before bed and finished the series.

Please consider training our special education teachers in dyslexia because it will help many students. I want other kids with dyslexia to learn how to read and to feel confident. They deserve it. No one should feel stupid.