

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Jennifer Zabetakis, I live in Tolland, 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 will not be testifying at the hearing however, I do want to stress to the committee how critical it is for our students to have Special Education Teachers that are not only aware of Dyslexia, but also able TEACH a student with Dyslexia. This can ONLY be done with proper training received as part of an Evidence – Based Structured Literacy Program. It is troubling that the Connecticut public schools are in the difficult position of paying to continually re-train teachers due to Higher Learning Institutes pushing their responsibilities down to the schools.

Special Education Teachers are a lifeline for many students. These teachers will provide the necessary tools and teachings dyslexic students will use throughout their entire lifetime. Having fully prepared Special Education Teachers graduating from higher learning institutes is essential not only to our students, but also to our school systems. The Connecticut Public Schools are not provided a pool of teacher candidates from institutes of higher learning that are able to meet the needs of these students – students that make up 15% - 20% of their student population.

The Education Committee must hold Higher Learning accountable for the product they produce by supporting HB 7254 in its' entirety, especially –

- Supervised Practicum Hours for Special Education Candidates is a MUST. We have to support our teachers by providing a solid training program that has been shown to instill a true understanding within each and every Special Education Teacher candidate

- Training MUST occur PRIOR to candidates graduating a Higher Learning Institute. It is essential that Connecticut holds Higher Learning Institutes accountable for producing quality Special Education Teachers that Connecticut can then employ within the public schools without having to pay to re- train

I appreciate your time and your support of HB 7254.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Zabetakis