My name is Christine Johnson, a Connecticut certified teacher, and I live in Groton, Connecticut. I fully support HB 6517 to create necessary frameworks, guidance and accountability to support dyslexia legislation implementation.

Our family's struggles in dyslexia began in the fall of 2014. My son was receiving tier intervention in first grade by a reading teacher, already struggling and over a year behind benchmark standards. I was updated in regards to his progress twice that year, with no mention that his difficulties may be more significant. He was showing progress but not closing the gap on meeting grade level expectations. Being a first-grade teacher myself, I trusted that school system was providing the appropriate intervention for my child. By the time my son was in second grade he was a year and half behind. I reached out to his reading teacher and expressed my concern about my son's reading development. I was told he that was making progress according to the SRBI data with no mention that his educational gap between his peers was widening. All intervention progress monitoring needed to be requested by us, as the teachers were reluctant to tell me that his reading was significantly delayed. My son was in tier 3 intervention for year and half and still falling further behind his peers. In March 2016, I requested a PPT for my son to be tested. We received my son's test scores at a PPT in June 2016 and at that meeting we were told he did not qualify for special education services. However, the placement team observed him being inattentive during the evaluation and put Nathan a 504 plan.

In the fall of third grade, we called another PPT due to our concern of lack of progress. At this meeting, he was determined to eligible for special education services due to the SRBI data and he qualified with a learning disability, but no diagnosis of dyslexia. He continued to work the reading specialist daily receiving LLI intervention in Foundations, a program for slightly delayed readers, not dyslexic readers. He also began receiving additional special education support in other subjects as other aspects of his learning were being affected. As an educator, I had observed the gap get wider with my son's reading progress. He was now nearly 2 years behind, and in third grade children require reading to learn rather than just learning to read. I watched my son struggle every day.

In December of 2016 we pursued an outside evaluation by a specialist and my son was diagnosed with dyslexia. We requested another PPT to review the evaluation. At this meeting in February 2017, we brought an advocate to speak about the testing. We requested, based on the specialist evaluation for my son's primary disability, to have his disability be change to dyslexia rather than just learning disabled on his IEP. The school disagreed with our outside evaluation conclusions, even though the evaluation and test scores clearly displayed my son struggled with phonics and phonological awareness. My son continued to receive Foundations from the reading intervention teacher as his main reading instruction.

With the help and guidance of our advocate, we requested another meeting and the school district agreed to change is diagnosis to dyslexia in May of 2017. He was subsequently started in a program designed for dyslexic readers in the 4th grade, the "Wilson" program, but his teacher only had a 3-day introductory course (taken after his IEP modification) and did not have full certification. With pressure for training (by his parents and his advocate), the school agreed on certification for his teacher, and his she underwent formal Wilson training with Nathan as her practicum student for level 1 certification.

It took two and half years of advocating for my son before he received the appropriate reading instruction with a program designed for dyslexic readers, a reading disability that could have been easily screened and diagnosed at a much younger age. My son, now in the 7th grade, and is behind in other aspects of his education. As a result of his late diagnosis and resistance to appropriate instruction, he

now needs much more direct instruction in other areas of his learning, a condition that should not have been had he received proper intervention at a young age. Prior to my son's diagnosis, I don't believe his primary teachers or his reading specialists knew the signs of dyslexic readers or were able to properly screen.

By December of 2017 my son, was the catalyst for getting his primary reading instructor Wilson level 1 certified. The school subsequently had two additional teachers properly trained and certified in Wilson instruction for dyslexic readers. Although the statistics show that 10-15% of readers may be dyslexic, I do not believe anywhere near that number of children are diagnosed as dyslexic in his school.

Sincerely,

Christine Johnson, Parent and Educator

Groton, CT