

March 12, 2015

Dear Senator Herman Baertschiger Jr.;

I am a resident of Pendleton, Oregon and I am writing because I have found it very difficult to access supports and services for my dyslexic daughter within my public school system.

As many as 1 in 5 students have dyslexia, and yet Oregon's Universities do not provide teacher training on how to effectively teach these bright, eager and capable students. I have been in contact with many parents in my district and across the state and it is obvious to me that this is a widespread issue and not something isolated to my family.

When my daughter began showing signs of reading struggles in Kindergarten, it was nearly impossible to get the tests needed to figure out why she was having trouble. They did a bit of testing but nothing to really "diagnosis". The district does RTI or response to intervention which doesn't figure out what is causing the trouble. This is a "wait and see" approach which causes kids to lose precious time for appropriate interventions. It is very hard to watch a very bright child struggle in school and begin to think they are "stupid" because they can't read like their peers. At the end of first grade, we paid out of pocket for private testing and recently have just had some more testing done which we pay for ourselves.

I've been talking with the teachers and school administrators and am shocked to find that her teachers, principal and even the special educators they consulted did not seem to be familiar with or have an understanding of dyslexia. My daughter is receiving special education services but the school does not have the appropriate programming to teach her to read. We are currently paying for a private tutor two days a week and have purchased a tutoring program for her to use which costs \$300 per unit. Currently, my daughter can read 15 words per minutes which is very far below the expectations for a second grade student. Imagine working all day in a job that you can't do very well and then being so tired and having an extra 2 hours a week of extra work once you're done with your work day.

I have learned a lot about dyslexia and all of the research that has occurred over the past decades. It is time for teachers to have the skills needed to teach ALL students to read, including my daughter. Educators should know about dyslexia, the most common of all learning disabilities and parents should not have to fight or look for outside resources just to keep their dyslexic children on target for learning grade level standards.

I ask that you take our story to heart and begin to investigate what is currently happening to students with dyslexia. Also, I ask that you support new legislation in Oregon for students with dyslexia. As many as 1 in 5 students have dyslexia, like I said above. Oregon's Universities do not provide teacher training to effectively teacher these bright, eager and capable students.

The goals of this bill are:

- Ensure current teachers know the warning signs of dyslexia.
- Ensure University teacher preparation programs offer coursework on dyslexia.
- Ensure school districts screen for the risk factors of dyslexia in the earliest grades.
- Ensure ODE has a dyslexia specialist on staff to support school districts to help students with dyslexia succeed.

Attached is a photo of my daughters, Katelyn and RyLee. Both have dyslexia as well as my husband, Chris. I thank you for taking the time to read our story and I will look forward to hearing what plans you envision for strengthening services and supports for dyslexic students in our school districts.

Sincerely,

Emma Lee Demianew

