

Testimony for Senate Bill 612, regarding dyslexia

From: Maria Baker, resident of Portland, Oregon 97202

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Although our son Ethan attended preschool and kindergarten, and was read-aloud-to daily, at age six he struggled to learn the sounds of the alphabet. Each trimester of first grade his teacher reported, "He is not reading a grade level." We didn't want him to lose his confidence, so we hired a tutor. As his mother, I was especially eager to provide him with an excellent foundation for literacy because I had struggled with reading for most of my school years. It was a weakness I successfully hid. Separately, my father never progressed past a first grade reading level.

By luck, Ethan's tutor was trained in an evidence-based reading instruction methodology for *dyslexia*. She taught him hand signals for the short vowels (multisensory). Long vowels were held-off until he mastered the short vowels (cumulative). And common letters for reversals were strategically introduced (sequential). For two years he met with his tutor twice a week for 45-minutes. I learned that this is a relatively common event for families who can afford the intervention. I regret my father and I were not so lucky.

Today our son is thriving in the fifth grade and reading at grade level. He is enjoying school. He was officially diagnosed with dyslexia in January 2015. As a family we advocate for Ethan each year, making sure his teachers understand the challenges related to slow reading and effortful

note taking. He reads traditionally (with his eyes) and he listens to audiobooks for school and for pleasure.

I support SB612 because every child with dyslexia deserves the appropriate type of early intervention Ethan received, every teacher and school district deserves to have the tools necessary to reach dyslexic learners, and Oregon deserves to have a fair and successful educational system.

End of testimony