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Decoding Dyslexia-Oregon
In Support of HB 2412
May 4, 2015

Senator Roblan and members of the committee,

My name is Jennifer Cappalonga. I am a parent, educator, and member of the Decoding Dyslexia Community. I am here to testify in support of HB 2412.

Most of us have heard the term dyslexia, so it is shocking to realize that as a state, we have no real strategy to address this learning difference. What the National Institutes of Health tells us in replicated, longitudinal, independent studies is that dyslexia affects one in five.¹ In terms of Oregon's K-12 students, that is roughly 113,000 students. At Decoding Dyslexia Oregon we receive emails and/or give advice to families from Bend to Burns, from Talent to Tillamook and from Portland to Pendleton.

There isn't an area of our state that escapes the repercussions of dyslexia, a neurological learning difference which has a strong genetic component. Affluent families who live in proximity to trained tutors provide evidence-based interventions for their children while others families cannot. This is an equity issue. Because the state of Oregon has no real strategy to address the needs of these bright and capable learners, information about dyslexia identification and intervention is almost entirely absent from our teacher education programs. The result is that our teachers are not able to identify and effectively teach 20% of their students. This is true despite the fact that screening is easily implemented and our teachers want the tools to be able to teach all of their students.

As a regular education science teacher with special education credentials, I had hundreds of students who displayed all the red flags of dyslexia. It was heartbreaking to watch them fall through the cracks. As a parent of a child with dyslexia it was maddening that I did not have the training to teach my own child to read and write. I am not alone in my lack of training. Decade after decade of research shows teachers are not getting the training they need to teach children with dyslexia to read and write. This is as true in Oregon as it is nationally.

HB 2412 begins to rectify this problem by requiring that education preparation programs for teachers provide instruction on dyslexia and that this instruction be consistent with the best practice knowledge and standards.

Dyslexia touches many and the personal and societal costs of ignoring these learning needs are huge. Some statistics:

- Research shows that 95% of reading failure is preventable—by using appropriate reading systems and well-trained teachers. (Shaywitz)

- More than 38.7% of children with learning disabilities drop out of high school, compared to 11% of the general student population. (Source: 25th Annual Report to Congress, U.S. Dept. of Education)
- 31% of adolescents with learning disabilities will be arrested three to five years out of high school. (Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study. SRI International for U.S. Department of Education, 1993)
- 48% of prisoners have been diagnosed with dyslexia(Moody, 2000)

I urge you to support HB 2412 so that education preparation programs for teachers will begin to provide instruction on dyslexia that is consistent with the best practice knowledge and standards.

Thank you.