

**Testimony for Joint committee On Ways and Means SubCommittee On Education
In Support of SB 612
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Good Morning Co-Chair Komp and Co-Chair Monroe and members of the subcommittee. My name is Jennifer Cappalonga. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 612. I am speaking to you today on behalf of Decoding Dyslexia Oregon.

Decoding Dyslexia Oregon is part of a national movement of parents and educators. We are working to ensure children with dyslexia receive the resources they need to succeed in school. In Oregon we have 2 chapters and over 2000 members. We were the fifth State to join the movement, and in less than 3 years, the national movement has grown to all 50 States and 4 Canadian providences. We hear daily from teachers who are concerned for their students. They recognize that their best efforts, and those of their peers are failing to meet the educational needs of all of their students, and that many times these students exhibit the symptoms and learning style of children with dyslexia. We hear daily from parents who struggle to find an appropriate education for their children, whose schools do not have the programs or know how to teach their children to read and write. Many families spend large amounts of money paying for private services so that their children do not experience lifelong illiteracy and others cannot afford this privilege. This is an equity issue.

Dyslexia is a neurological condition that often runs in families making it difficult to read, write and spell. Recent research for the National Institute of Health estimates that as many as 1 in 5 students have dyslexia. In Oregon this equates to approximately 112,700 public school students. It has been shown that 80% of students with LDs have dyslexia. However, special education, reading and general education teachers receive no training or professional development on dyslexia. Teachers do not know the warning signs of dyslexia and do not have the tools needed to teach our students. Students with dyslexia who are educated in the public schools typically never learn to read and write on par with their peers. Consequently, their substance abuse, drop out, and incarceration rates are disproportionately high.

Thank you for the time to talk about why this bill is important to families of students with dyslexia and their teachers. SB 612 will require one teacher in each elementary school to receive training on dyslexia. Having just one teacher in each elementary school building be able to recognize dyslexia, understand and teach about the appropriate interventions, and teach students with dyslexia means that our students with dyslexia can begin to receive the free appropriate public education that they deserve.

SB 612 will also insure that Oregon will create a screening plan to catch dyslexia no later than 1st grade. When implemented, we will move away from our wait to fail system to a more effective early intervention system. SB 612 will also ensure that ODE will have a dyslexia specialist to

offer support to districts in relation to this bill and dyslexia, by providing resources for teacher training and screening. One resource person for the state is essential for such a prevalent learning disability especially when our base knowledge about dyslexia is so low. We envision that this bill will ensure that struggling readers with dyslexia will be understood and supported. We believe that empowering teachers with tools and training will help to ensure all children with dyslexia will read by third grade, be successful in school, graduate with their peers and become successful contributors to their community.

This bill is important to our students who struggle with basic literacy skills: As a trained special education teacher myself, I understand how important this bill is to our teachers. Many teachers want to teach all of their students to read and write but haven't been taught the skills to help our children with dyslexia. . And finally, this bill is important to our communities because we want all of our children have the basic skills that they need to achieve and contribute to society: I urge you to support SB 612.

Thank you.

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