

My name is Theresa Sorensen, and I live in Happy Valley, and I am the parent of two dyslexic children who have very different stories.

My older daughter Lillian struggled through kindergarten with the beginning skills that are required to learn to read. She had difficulty recognizing letters and applying the correct sound to them, her spelling was rudimentary, and her handwriting was illegible. Even though these are warning signs for dyslexia, her teachers encouraged us to "wait and see", telling me that it was "too early" to screen for dyslexia, and that my daughter was "too smart" to be dyslexic.

As she progressed into first and second grade, we continued to raise our concerns for dyslexia with her teachers, and Lillian continued to fall behind, until one teacher finally admitted to me that my daughter had not "fallen far *enough* behind" to qualify for any kind of testing or intervention through the school system, and that it could be years before she did, because she *is* very smart and had learned to compensate. We waited on a waiting list for 5 months and paid \$1200 to have her privately evaluated by a licensed clinical psychologist. Although she was in the spring of her second grade year, she tested at a beginning first grade reading level, and all of her diagnostic tests were consistent with dyslexia.

Because her teachers *couldn't*, and the school district *wouldn't* help my daughter, I learned how to tutor her myself with a style of Orton-Gillingham tutoring. Lillian and I have spent over 400 hours working to close the gap and maintain her reading above grade level. My proudest moments are when I catch her reading just for fun, and I wish that I could go back in time to erase those years of daily homework and reading struggles that left her feeling stupid and unable to relate to her peers.

Dyslexia has a very strong genetic component, and at the time of Lillian's evaluation, my younger son Nate was 5 1/2 years old. We considered *his* warning signs, which included late speech development, he often mixed up syllables within a word, and he had a hard time with the concept of rhyme. I started tutoring him at the same time I started working with his sister, and he has learned to read solely through this method. We had him privately evaluated at the beginning of his first grade year, and he tested at a mid-second grade reading level, a year and a half *above* his grade level.

Unfortunately, my son Nate is a rarity - a dyslexic who reads above grade level and who has no idea what it feels like to be behind, to struggle, or to be ashamed. But there is no reason why all dyslexic kids can't be like Nate: identified early and supplied with appropriate, evidence-based intervention *before* they fall behind.

I hope you will consider our story, and the future of 20% of Oregon's children, with your support for Senate Bill 612. Thank you.