

SB 1003

Hearing Date: March 30, 2017

Dear Senator Arnie Roblan and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

I writing to you today to encourage your support of SB 1003, provided it includes amendments ensuring Oregon children will receive a screening for the risk factors of dyslexia, including any known family history, and that the parental notification will specifically include the term "dyslexia".

As a parent of two dyslexic children, I can confidently state that both of my children displayed obvious signs of dyslexia while in preschool. My daughter had extreme difficulties with rhyming games and following multistep directions, while my son was a "late-talker" who did not say his first word until he was 2 ½ years old and then proceeded to mispronounce the words he did say. Both of my children revealed even more warning signs upon entering kindergarten, where their difficulty in connecting letters to sounds was immediately apparent. Had anyone inquired into their family history, we could have told them that their father also had difficulty learning to read and had received special education services in elementary school. Asking specific screening questions is essential to identifying dyslexic children in public schools.

After identifying a child with risk factors for dyslexia, it is important that parents be specifically notified of this risk and its prevalence in our population. Receiving a letter from my child's school stating that my child was at risk for "reading difficulties" would have been unhelpful and redundant - anyone who read with my children knew they were having "reading difficulties". Dyslexia is a specific learning disability, and in a "Dear Colleague" letter from October 2015, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) in the US Dept of Education wrote: "OSERS further encourages States to review their policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that they do not prohibit the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia in evaluations, eligibility, and IEP documents." Oregon needs to follow this recommendation.

I encourage you to strengthen and then support SB 1003.

Thank you,

Theresa Sorensen
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