

To the Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am parent of child who was recently diagnosed with dyslexia. My daughter is in 2nd grade, and she has always struggled with reading. I am writing you to express my opposition Senate Bill 221.

When my daughter was in preschool, I knew that something was not right with her pre-reading development. She was slow to learn the alphabet, sounds, and numbers, she had difficulty with rhyming, and she struggled with fine motor skills. From the time she entered kindergarten and through the beginning of this year, I have been reassured over and over by teachers that she would catch up. She is currently in second grade and her reading level is at the middle of first grade. This is where she started at the beginning of the year and she has not made any progress this school year. This school year has been a big challenge for our family. We have watched her confidence plummet and her frustrations with school significantly increase. She is now seeing a counselor because of the anxiety that has built this year around her struggles. She has been receiving intervention services on and off since kindergarten at school through a whole language literacy intervention program. It has been an ineffective program for her. In December, we took things into our own hands after not seeing improvements with what the school was doing. Testing through a private psychologist revealed that my daughter has dyslexia. The signs and symptoms of dyslexia describe her skills exactly.

I think the thing that has disheartened me the most is the lack of understanding of dyslexia in the education world and even more so the unwillingness of schools to acknowledge dyslexia as a reading disability. When I brought up concerns to her current teacher at the beginning of the year about the possibility of dyslexia, she told me she learned that "dyslexia does not exist, there are only bad teachers." When I questioned the intervention teacher at our school about teaching methods for children with dyslexia, specifically the Orton-Gillingham Method, she had no knowledge about it. This is the only research proven method of instruction that benefits children with dyslexia. The special education team at our school dismissed the term dyslexia immediately as well. This lack of awareness and flat out denial of its existence astonishes me when there is so much brain research that supports dyslexia, how children learn to read, and the best methods to help children with it.

I feel so discouraged for my daughter and I think the system will fail her. How can I have any expectation that her school will be able to help her succeed if teachers do not have an understanding of dyslexia and how to provide services to those children? It is hard to not have regrets as a parent. I often wonder where we would be now had her kindergarten teacher recognized that many of her signs and symptoms were from dyslexia. We could have intervened early and gotten her the help that she needed 2 1/2 years ago. I wonder where we would be if the intervention teacher in her school had a firm understanding of dyslexia and used an instructional program for interventions that was proven by research to improve the reading of children with dyslexia, instead of using an ineffective whole language approach. These are both great teachers, they just don't have an understanding of dyslexia. She has recently started with a tutor that specializes in dyslexia and uses an Orton-Gillingham approach in her tutoring and we have already seen progress with her in the short time she has been working with her. This tutor has her Ph.D. in education. She has been trying to go into school districts to educate them on

dyslexia and how to help these children succeed, and the districts do not want to hear what she has to say. The only hope we have is that we, as parents, will do anything and everything we can to help her succeed. I am thankful that we have the resources to do this. Tutoring starts at \$50 an hour and at twice a week, that it is a huge financial hit. I think about the number of families who cannot afford to pay for this out of pocket and have to rely on the school to help their children. Those children will be left behind if we have a system that refuses to educate our new teachers about dyslexia. It is not okay that the only children with dyslexia that will receive best practice in reading instruction are those who's families can afford to pay for it.

It is very concerning that colleges of education are not preparing our teachers to recognize the signs and symptoms of dyslexia and how to best support children with dyslexia. Lack of prepared educators is the root of the problem and not addressing this has consequences for our children. Until we change the system by shifting the attitudes and beliefs within the education world by training our new teachers to understand how the brain works and to understand reading science, we will continue to fail children like my daughter. I am asking that you oppose Senate Bill 221 and require that Oregon universities properly train new teachers. We cannot continue with the same inadequate teacher prep programs that have failed so many children.

Thank-you for your time,
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