

March 26, 2017

To Senate Education Committee Chair Senator Arnie Roblan and the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Mindy Legard Larson and I am a Professor of Education at Linfield College and a member of Teachers of Teachers of Literacy, a group of teacher educators representing universities and colleges in Oregon. We are writing in support of Senate Bill 221.

We agree with the legislature and members of Decoding Dyslexia that it is unacceptable to not meet the needs of any child in our educational system and it is an urgent task to address any gaps in teacher education programs to serve students who struggle with reading. Therefore, we support Senate Bill 221, which remedies the concern of tying Oregon standards to the International Dyslexia Association.

The phrase, "consistent with an international dyslexia association" in ORS 342.147 is somewhat deceiving because it appears the OARS were aligned to the International Dyslexia Association standards. By including the phrase, "standards consistent with an international dyslexia association" in the law, the state is conceding authority to a controversial organization external to Oregon to determine the teaching and learning methodologies teachers should use with children. Please do not limit teachers and students in this way. We want to use the best teaching methodologies, based upon research to ensure the highest quality of education for Oregon's children. We want teachers to be prepared to teach and support all children with reading difficulties, including those diagnosed with dyslexia.

In addition, the IDA standards do not adequately address English language learners, a growing population of students in Oregon, who can also struggle with reading challenges. It is our goal to ensure these children have teachers who are prepared to meet their needs.

It is important to note that over the last year our group of literacy teacher educators has collaborated to create a dyslexia module to implement in our programs, in addition to the many other modifications we have made to our Elementary Multiple-Subject, Reading Intervention and Special Education: Generalist programs. This winter, we presented at two state conferences about our collaborative work. At the Oregon Reading Association conference on February 11, 2017 we presented a session titled, Teaching With the New Dyslexia Standards. Most recently at the Oregon Association of Teacher Education conference on March 17, 2017, we presented a session titled, How are Educator Preparation Programs Supporting In-Service and Pre-Service Teachers to Work with Students who Demonstrate Characteristics Associated with Dyslexia? We have taken the mandates from ORS 342.147 and OAR 584-420-0016 seriously and we continue to review and modify our programs to meet the needs of all children with reading difficulties, including those diagnosed with dyslexia.

Therefore, we are asking, on behalf of teacher educators representing Oregon teacher preparation programs, that the Senate Education Committee pass Senate Bill 221 as written, without amendment, to the Senate floor.

Sincerely,
Mindy Legard Larson, PhD, Linfield College
Donna Kalmbach Phillips, PhD, Pacific University

Beth LaForce, PhD, George Fox University
Dot McElhone, PhD, Portland State University
Carol Lauritzen, PhD, Eastern Oregon University
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