

**Testimony for the Senate Committee on Education
In opposition of SB 221
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In opposition of SB 221**

I have been a special education teacher for over 10 years and have worked directly with students and teachers on a daily basis. I am a National Board Certified Teacher and have taught in 3 different school districts in urban and rural settings. Through my undergraduate and graduate programs, I received no training in strategies to effectively teach students with Dyslexia. After years of working with bright kids who were making little to no progress, I made it a priority to learn more about identifying and remediating students with Dyslexia. I have spent thousands of dollars of my own money and countless hours of my own time to access this information and I still feel a need to learn more.

What I have found in teaching is that some kids come to school with a solid foundation ready to learn to read while others come without a base, not yet ready to learn letter sounds or how to put those sounds together to make words; these are our Dyslexic students. I've found that all teachers know what to do when kids start Kindergarten with that solid foundation. It's important to note that this foundation has nothing to do with how parents have prepared their child, the student's socio-economic status, race, or ethnicity. This has to do with if a child has the phonological processing skills needed for emergent reading. Our teachers are fantastic and ready to teach kids with this solid foundation, but when kids lack the skill of phonological processing our teachers' don't have the right knowledge to remediate this type of learner. They, much like myself, have not been prepared to teach Dyslexic learners in their classroom.

As the only teacher in my school who had training in teaching students with Dyslexia, many of my colleagues, general education and special education teachers alike, have come to me asking for strategies. I struggled with wanting to give them time and support and balancing my own caseload and responsibilities. Teachers need more than a 45-minute brainstorming session, and more than I can give them. They need more, and I need more, and we don't know where to turn to get it.

Oftentimes when a student comes to school with a deficit in their phonological processing, that child ends up in Special Education. Unfortunately, children don't qualify for special education services until they have already fallen behind. In my experience as a special education teacher, I usually didn't evaluate or begin to provide kids with special education services until they were about two years behind, which in most cases, at the earliest is in 2nd grade. At this time they need to make more than 1 year's growth each year in order to catch up to their peers, when they are already feeling like a failure. This is frustrating because special education is not designed to handle the needs of 1 in 5 students. Our general education and special education teachers both need to be prepared to meet these needs. This is simply not happening.

I appreciate your time and consideration and urge you to oppose SB 221. This bill would water down university standards and allow universities to do more of the same. When it comes to preparing our future teachers in working with such a large population of learners, it is imperative that we do more.