

**Testimony for the Senate Committee on Education
In Opposition to SB 221
March 29, 2017**

Chair Roblan, members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am a parent, teacher, and member of Decoding Dyslexia Oregon and I urge you to oppose SB 221.

Twenty years ago, I received my M.Ed. with endorsements in chemistry and special education from an Oregon university. I "learned" in my education classes that there was no such thing as dyslexia and that there was no real methodology to teach students with learning disabilities to read. Consequently, although I was skilled in many ways, studied hard, paid a lot of money for my degree, and worked tirelessly, I failed many of my students who were poor readers. I now realize that many of these students had all the signs and symptoms of dyslexia.

It was not until my young son had all the signs and symptoms of the family trait of dyslexia that I learned the facts about dyslexia. Like many parents with children failing to learn to read in schools, I began to do my own research and found the empirical neuroscience and psychological studies that define effective treatment for dyslexia. The depth and breadth of science and knowledge that had been kept from me during my education program was shocking. I remembered the troubling problem I had encountered while working on my master's thesis. My master's thesis was on learning disabilities and as my data came in, it was surprisingly contrary to what I had been taught. I was told that I had to throw out my data and find data that fit my professor's hypothesis. Since becoming involved in a community of teachers committed to making change for students with dyslexia, I have heard many similar stories that indicate that this is not an uncommon practice. I share this story because it helps to illustrate the how/why the science of reading that is supported by the National Institutes of Health and the disciplines of psychology and neuroscience has yet to become common practice in education.

Today, I have the privilege of teaching courses on special education for general education teachers to student teachers. These bright, motivated, caring individuals study and work hard throughout their program to learn their coursework and meet the needs of their students. While I have no doubt that they will be great teachers for many students, they do not have the basic knowledge to teach or even support the learning of 20% of their students, their students with dyslexia. They will be unable to teach or support reading of their students with dyslexia because they do not understand the basics of our written language. For example:

- Some do not know the difference between a long and short vowel.
- Many do not know the conditions in which c makes an /s/ sound (when followed by an e, i, or y).

- Most do not know the different vowel teams and the various sounds that these combinations make. (Example: ou has four sound variants, as in: found, you, four, and country)
- None have enough background to teach reading in a direct, explicit, systematic way supported by the National Reading Panel and needed by students with dyslexia to learn to read.

I urge you to reject SB 221 because my students who will soon be teachers need to have the knowledge and skills to teach all of their students. They want the knowledge and skills to teach all of their students and have paid tuition to learn to teach all of their students.

I urge you to reject SB 221 because it rolls back the implementation timeline for HB 2412 which will delay student teachers getting the knowledge they need and result in many more Oregon children not learning to read.

And, I urge you to reject SB 221 particularly because it deletes the knowledge and practice standards of an international dyslexia association from the language of HB 2412 that passed unanimously in 2015 . The importance of using these industry standards which align with the National Reading Panel standards, Common Core Standards, the Oregon Literacy Framework are well known and accepted by those who successfully teach children with dyslexia to read. The importance of our universities adhering to accepted industry standards can not be overemphasized.

Thank you for your continued time and support for the 1:5 with dyslexia who deserve to be taught to read.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Cappalonga

Portland, Oregon