

Testimony for the Senate Committee on Education  
In Support of HB 2412  
March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017

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I am writing as a concerned educator and parent. I wish I could be at the hearing in person, to convey my deep concerns with the proposed SB 221, but I cannot attend on this date.

When I was completing my Master of Arts in Teaching, I did not receive any direct instruction on how to help students who have learning disabilities. My impression, whether based on my own interpretations or actual given information was that teachers who got an endorsement in Special Education would “handle” those kids’ needs. With an emphasis on elementary and middle school age groups, I assumed kids would be able to read and write by the time they reached my classroom (my preference was to teach 4<sup>th</sup> grade or higher). Therefore, it wasn’t surprising when I did not receive instruction on best practices for teaching reading at the early stages such as alphabetic principal, phonological and phonemic awareness, etcetera. I graduated with the understanding that by the time students got to my classroom, they would be proficient and we would be working on higher level reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. Of course, it wasn’t long before my impressions were corrected in the real classroom.

When I read the proposed SB 221, I am disappointed in what appears to be an attempt to water down expectations for implementing HB 2412. Our colleges and universities are the places of “higher education” and it is not unreasonable to expect these institutions to be held to the highest of standards for education. This includes taking the latest available research and ensuring its’ students (our future teachers) are completely equipped to meet the needs of all of the students in classrooms. It is a grave mistake to ignore all of the neuroscience and research on dyslexia put forth in the past decade for the sake of inconvenience. Not only is this unacceptable, it is unethical to send these teachers into the classrooms unequipped to teach using the best practices as proven by said research.

I appreciate the stress the implementation of HB 2412 puts on teacher education programs, but have also had the opportunity to witness the profound impact this knowledge has on teacher candidates. The stress of implementation for universities pales in comparison to the stress on students in a classroom who are dyslexic and do not receive the help they need because their teacher does not understand dyslexia.

I personally have already met with a local college and have given presentations on dyslexia to junior and senior classes of student teachers. Each presentation was followed with several students approaching me, thanking me for the presentation, and stating that they themselves are dyslexic, or have a friend or brother that fits exactly what I had described. These student

teachers are the ones that will have a very unique impact in the classroom, having an even better understanding of the struggles those with dyslexia face when they continually fail to meet expectations. Dyslexia does not discriminate; even teachers in the classrooms can be affected.

When I met with this group of local college education professors, they were excited to implement the necessary curriculum, but did need guidance in how this could be done. Their complaint was not knowing the expectations set forth. Therefore, to water down HB 2412, with even less clarity of expectations, is not helpful. These professors wholeheartedly agreed that teaching their students about dyslexia and other learning disabilities is absolutely essential, but needed resources and direction, and most of all, clear expectations.

In summation, I strongly urge the language of HB 2412 not be modified as proposed in SB 221. Consistency and clear expectations for the universities and colleges is essential to accomplish the necessary objectives set forth in HB 2412. Teachers and parents know that setting clear expectations with high standards produces excellence. Those expectations should be supported by our governing bodies with resources and guidance.

Thank you sincerely for your consideration of my professional concerns. I urge you to reject SB 221 and keep the path clear for a better future not only our students with dyslexia, but for the teachers who *need and want* to know how to help these individuals.