

House Bill 2412
Senate Bill 612
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Parent of dyslexic son
Private tutor using an Orton Gillingham approach

I participated in an educational practicum for reading instruction during the 1970's through Oregon College of Education (now known as Western University). During one of the meetings with the lead instructors, I broke down into tears. I was surprised and confused by the intensity of my emotion. In that moment, all the years of watching my younger brother, Scott, struggle with reading barreled over me. Those memories were painful for me too. All the extra help that my mother provided fell short and most of his elementary school experiences were negative. Scott received help during his high school years that made some difference. A doctor suggested that he was dyslexic.

Scott's self-esteem suffered significantly over his years in school. After graduation, he was not able to qualify for the military service that he desired. This painful story is not unique.

Dyslexia runs in families. I should not have been surprised when my son demonstrated difficulty in learning to read. Because of my brother's experience, I was wary of the instruction that my son would receive in school, any school. After several years of homeschool and private school, I found the Blosser Center for Dyslexia and received a thorough assessment of Brian's strengths and weaknesses. Finally, someone understood how Brian needed to learn. At this point, Brian was in fifth grade.

Though well meaning, the private school that my son attended was not initially receptive to the volunteer tutor who would be working with Brian several times a week during the day. Through the efforts of several parents who negotiated with the school faculty for the needs of children requiring appropriate reading instruction, my son and another student were, for the first time, able to make progress in their reading, spelling and language skills. This intervention changed the course of my son's life. With appropriate support, Brian overcame the challenges of dyslexia and could focus on his strengths. He attended college and became an engineer.

The proposed bills are needed to identify signs of dyslexia before the fifth grade. Early intervention would have made such a difference for my brother and for my son.

The proposed bills are needed to ensure training for teachers who will be working with students like my brother and my son. Uphold the knowledge and practice standards of the International Dyslexia Association. I admire and respect the work of Louisa Moats, Ed.D. who said in a recent talk, "It is knowledge of language that teachers must have in order to stimulate knowledge of language in their students. It is impossible to learn how to read and write effectively without language processing being fluent and accurate at every level." Good instructional programs do

not supplant teacher training. Both are needed. Our families and our children deserve nothing less.

The proposed bills are needed to repair the damaged relationships between parents of dyslexic students and their teachers. Laws must be designed to unite our efforts and improve the limited scope of services currently offered. Trust will be gained when we can speak a common language and work together with appropriate accommodations and appropriate instruction to reach the educational goals of our students.

Note: Family member names were changed to maintain privacy.