

Dear Senators and Representatives,

I reach out to you today to urge your support for protecting the important strides made for the thousands of dyslexic students in 2015 (HB 2412) by requiring that reading training for teachers require the instruction be consistent with the standards of international organizations on dyslexia, the dyslexia experts. I am a constituent of Senator Boquist and Representative Nearman but am also reaching out to leaders who I know care deeply about helping our students who are too often left behind and recognize that these are truly issues of learning equity. I regret that I will be out of state for work during the hearing this Thursday, otherwise I would certainly be there in person.

Unfortunately, despite the substantial numbers of dyslexic students in our schools, our universities do not prepare our teachers to teach dyslexic students or even to recognize their many students who will have this learning disability. Please consider the experience of just one Oregon family, ours, and hear how badly we want other children and families to be spared our incredibly difficult experience.

My intelligent son, Noah, struggled from kindergarten through sixth grade with reading and writing. We were told he should practice harder (unhelpful and hurtful to a dyslexic child who is working as hard as he can) and that there wasn't anything more they could do. Teacher after teacher at multiple schools never suggested he be tested for dyslexia despite his exhibiting classic signs. Because our teachers aren't taught dyslexia best practices teachers with the best of intentions try to help dyslexic kids by drilling approaches that can't work for the dyslexic mind, sound it out, read more, memorize sight words and many more. These dyslexic kids work so hard but they can't learn to read this way. So, overtime despite their great effort they become convinced that they are stupid, are told they aren't trying hard enough and lose hope for themselves.

Noah was diagnosed this summer with dyslexia and dysgraphia and is now, in seventh grade getting the support he needs to read successfully and is trying to get ready for the high school requirements that are quickly approaching. This is a boy who should be and will be going to college but if we hadn't on our own demanded testing by dyslexia experts, he certainly would not be on this path.

For him and for all the kids that are left behind every year, please maintain these important protections requiring inclusion of dyslexia best practices as requirements for new teachers by rejecting SB 221 which would repeal these protections. The requirements now in place will help thousands of dyslexic kids in our schools and thousands of good teachers who want to help their students. If I can be of any help or answer any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Most Sincerely,
Mom of a dyslexic student,
Kathleen George