

To the Senate Education Committee:

It is my understanding that SB221 is intended to remove the requirement for teacher training programs to include comprehensive instruction about dyslexia. I am writing to briefly provide my concerns.

I have worked full time for 24 years in the healthcare administration business, but recently have taken time off to address the needs of my two dyslexic children, both of whom were identified very late (4th and 7th grade) and only by my own investment in private evaluations. Yet, there were numerous classic warning signs evident as early as kindergarten, which I now know due to my own investment in graduate-level courses outside of Oregon to learn about dyslexia identification and appropriate Orton-Gillingham based instruction.

Here are some of the classic warning signs that existed: consistent trouble with weekly spelling tests but sometime passing after tremendous effort and yet not remembering the spelling after the test, poor spelling in written compositions of even high frequency words, odd pencil grip and hand pain and difficulty with handwriting, difficulty learning to tie shoes, slow choppy reading, fear of going to school, inability to take a standardized test in 3rd grade, frequent crying at school but not elsewhere, written work not reflective of verbal description, highly accurate listening comprehension, difficulty with math facts, inability to sound out unknown words. We knew the children were bright, as did anyone who spoke with them, and as was eventually proven by private testing to reveal high superior intelligence. A bright articulate child who cannot spell, becomes afraid of school, and has difficulty learning to read - and yet no reference to dyslexia for our first child ever in 7 years of elementary education, and for our second child not until she reached the point of extreme school anxiety during 4th grade.

When we inquired with the kindergarten teacher at our local Oregon public school about her initial struggle with reading, the very well-meaning and hard working teacher told us: "We will probably see the 'Christmas Miracle', a lot of the kindergarteners who have not yet learned how to read return from Christmas vacation and suddenly it has all clicked and they know how." This teacher was about 5 years out from having been recently formally educated as a teacher. In 1st and 2nd grade we raised our concern to the principal who said "This is nothing to worry about, we have students at ALL grade levels who are still learning to read!"

When we then transferred to private school after 3 years of public school and very little progress, the teachers were equally kind and hard working but had no answers or help of any kind when we scheduled meetings every year to discuss the reading and then the writing struggles. The school employed entirely Masters-Level educated teachers, most with 20+ years experience.

As a person who had no difficulty learning to read myself, and with no previous experience teaching children how to read, I did not know what to do and assumed that the teachers must know more than I did about learning to read. Had one teacher along the way, who could readily see how my children's spelling and writing compared with the majority of other students -- had they shown me the attached one page document with the classic warning signs of dyslexia, we would have immediately been concerned that it could be dyslexia and could have pursued the right kind of instruction earlier. Much better yet, the teachers would possess the knowledge to directly provide the right kind of instruction at school.

We, like most of the other parents we have now met with dyslexic children, have paid privately not only for educational testing but also for 1:1 tutoring to give our children the basic decoding and spelling skills to bring their reading the spelling up to grade level. I have even become a certified tutor myself to be able to teach them at home and begin helping others. We have undertaken significant costs, and therefore cannot accept the objections by teacher colleges associated with this bill suggesting that the cost of educating teachers about dyslexia is too much. Families with moderate or severe dyslexia are either paying 1 by 1 extreme personal costs per student, or are unable to afford the help. The better way to is to address this up front in school - the business case for our society is clear. I have reviewed plenty of other previous testimony outlining the facts about eventual incarceration of those who do not receive the help they need.

What has astounded me most about this experience is that our story is not unique, and that the information about effective reading intervention and appropriate accommodations is readily available, and even studied and proven by the National Institutes of Health. The information has been available for decades, yet it is not in the hands of our teachers.

I mentioned that my prior experience was in health care plan management. The situation with dyslexia in our school system looks to me like a healthcare system that would allow medical schools to omit education about asthma and diabetes. Imagine sending your child to a pediatrician who has had zero training and no knowledge of some of the most prevalent chronic conditions and the evidence based proven management and treatment. Now imagine your child has difficulty breathing, but you're told don't worry, they will probably outgrow it. And yet we send our children to school with teachers who have no training about dyslexia - and it impact 20% of the population and is the most common reason for reading failure.

I implore you to require any college or university that is training teachers, to teach them about dyslexia. Dyslexics can excel in school if they receive the right kind of instruction for their learning style.

Thank you,

Michele Barnett

# Warning Signs of Dyslexia

If a child has 3 or more of the following warning signs, encourage that child's parents and teachers to learn more about dyslexia.

## In Preschool

- delayed speech
- mixing up the sounds and syllables in long words
- chronic ear infections
- stuttering
- constant confusion of left versus right
- late establishing a dominant hand
- difficulty learning to tie shoes
- trouble memorizing their address, phone number, or the alphabet
- can't create words that rhyme
- a close relative with dyslexia

## In Elementary School

- dysgraphia (slow, non-automatic handwriting that is difficult to read)
- letter or number reversals continuing past the end of first grade
- extreme difficulty learning cursive
- slow, choppy, inaccurate reading:
  - guesses based on shape or context
  - skips or misreads prepositions (at, to, of)
  - ignores suffixes
  - can't sound out unknown words
- terrible spelling
- often can't remember sight words (they, were, does) or homonyms (their, they're, and there)
- difficulty telling time with a clock with hands
- trouble with math
  - memorizing multiplication tables
  - memorizing a sequence of steps
  - directionality
- when speaking, difficulty finding the correct word
  - lots of "whatyamacallits" and "thingies"
  - common sayings come out slightly twisted
- extremely messy bedroom, backpack, and desk
- dreads going to school
  - complains of stomach aches or headaches
  - may have nightmares about school

## In High School

All of the above symptoms plus:

- limited vocabulary
- extremely poor written expression
  - large discrepancy between verbal skills and written compositions
- unable to master a foreign language
- difficulty reading printed music
- poor grades in many classes
- may drop out of high school

## In Adults

Education history similar to above, plus:

- slow reader
- may have to read a page 2 or 3 times to understand it
- terrible speller
- difficulty putting thoughts onto paper
  - dreads writing memos or letters
- still has difficulty with right versus left
- often gets lost, even in a familiar city
- sometimes confuses b and d, especially when tired or sick

### To Learn More:

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**Bright Solutions for Dyslexia**

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