

Monday, April 3, 2017

Dear Senate Committee on Education:

Our daughter is a fourth grader and is dyslexic. She is halfway through an intensive, one-on-one tutoring system which is proven to teach dyslexic students. Our daughter's tutor meets with her year-round, one-on-one, two times a week, for an hour at a time. We have seen incredible results from her tutoring as her reading, writing and spelling have improved markedly. Even more importantly, our daughter no longer dreads school and even will pick up a book to read "for fun." However, she still has a long way to go.

When our daughter was in third grade, her tutor met with her in the school library two times a week for one-hour sessions, after school, when she was checked into the Extended Care program offered at the school. At the beginning of the fourth grade, the school district stated that we must comply with the Community Use of District Facilities policy and pay a \$50 per hour fee to use a table in the corner of the library. (This would be in addition to the \$50 per hour fee we were already paying the tutor.) The School Board denied our request to waive the facility use fee, and instead amended its policy to prohibit paid private tutors from using district facilities at all. As a result, we were forced to move our daughter's tutoring sessions to the evenings. These sessions are significantly less effective than when she tutored in the afternoon as she is tired and less focused after a full day.

We learned that our story is not unique. Several families in just our school and in our school district have been forced to find alternative locations for tutoring. This tutoring is absolutely critical for these children as the schools are not equipped to teach dyslexic students to read, write and spell. It's curious to us that the school districts want to both eschew their duty to provide a free and appropriate public education but also put up unnecessary road blocks to families who take on this responsibility themselves.

Lake Oswego and West Linn-Wilsonville School Districts both prohibit private tutors from using their facilities. We have heard that other districts in the Portland metro area do as well. Many districts that don't actually ban private tutors impose cost-prohibitive facility use fees, like the one we encountered. In searching for other public options, we learned that our public library also prohibits private tutors from using their facilities. These policies exist alongside ones that permit local neighborhood association groups, scout troops and others to use school facilities without cost. When we inquired why these groups could use the facilities and our tutor couldn't, the school board pointed to the fact that our tutor works for pay. Good tutors for dyslexic learners are few and far between and they are not free. The irony of imposing a facility use fee on one-on-one tutoring means the districts are profiting off these kids who are struggling. Either that or the fee is imposed as a de facto ban on tutors. Either way, these policies create an unnecessary burden on families whose students desperately need supplemental educational support.

SB 1002 balances students' need for supplemental instruction with school boards' concerns regarding liability and administrative burdens. SB 1002 does not require schools or libraries to allow facility use during hours when facilities are not otherwise open and does not require the school to provide any additional staffing or supervision. This bill does not create any liability (criminal or civil) for libraries, school boards or school personnel for any interactions between the private tutor and the student being tutored.

We urge you to support SB 1002 as amended.

Very truly yours,
Patrick and Amy Angel