

To the Senate Education Committee:

I am a parent of two public school junior high students, both with dyslexia. I am writing in support of this bill. This memo is to explain why.

Dyslexic students are currently effectively steered to get appropriate reading instruction from tutors outside of the public schools, because most of the schools have not trained their teachers to provide instruction according to IDA (International Dyslexia Association) standards, nor have they typically invested in evidence-based programs to provide such instruction. I appreciate that the Senate Education Committee is not only aware of this problem, but has already taken meaningful action toward long-term solutions with the recent passage of bills to require screening and teacher education, to begin implementation next year. It is my sincere hope that the next generation of dyslexic students will never even have to address this problem of how and where to get the help they need, because dyslexia will be flagged in K/1 and teachers will be trained to teach them in school during the regular school day.

While the new laws are admirable and a solid start, we are still left with thousands of children in school now who have vital tutoring needs - now now now - and many of these students will not directly benefit from the new laws coming soon. This is an issue for all of Oregon because: without the appropriate education to develop literacy skills, many of these students will be forced on a path well below their true potential, and for some this will include school failure, mental health problems, and even incarceration. Oregon's leaders know this is an issue for our entire community, as it is stated in the annual Governor's Proclamation for Dyslexia Awareness Month.

In my view, this bill is a helpful immediate step to remove barriers for some of our dyslexic students today (those who are able to get tutoring). Many students with learning disabilities benefit from additional help from tutors, and 80% of learning disabilities actually involve dyslexia. Therefore my comments here are focused on dyslexia, which impacts 1 in 5 students.

Last year, after my children were finally identified with SLD-reading impairment (dyslexia), I educated myself about dyslexia and learned that reading instruction methods using the Orton-Gillingham approach are the only recommended instruction to make progress toward closing the gap that had been created by lack of timely dyslexia identification and instruction. I then learned that I had to pay privately for this, and that I needed to drive my 7th grade child offsite from her public school in order to provide her with appropriate instruction. I then learned that this is the norm here - parents are asked to make great personal financial sacrifice and pay at least \$500/month per child for 3 years, and also a parent or caregiver has to remove the child from school premises to get it done -- all this while also keeping the child in school during most or all of the school day to access the curriculum to avoid further learning gaps, not to mention allowing the child to develop an activity of interest or area of strength outside of school. I think that this bill offers families a more viable option than they currently have today, and if our community becomes aware of the issues outlined in the attached proclamation there may be more widespread support for enabling progress for dyslexic students in as many ways as possible. This bill does not directly address the inequity for families that cannot afford tutoring at all, nor does it address the need for public schools to provide FAPE. We still must vigorously pursue the long-term solutions.

Thank you again for all of the work and attention paid to dyslexia with the recent bills going into effect next year.

Michele Barnett

