

April 3, 2017

Dear Senate Committee on Education,

Many of you know me in my professional life as the Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association Oregon Chapter. Today I write you regarding my personal life as a parent of a nine year old boy struggling with Dyslexia. I am writing in support of SB 1002 but also asking you to go one step further. I feel it is very important to allow the tutors to come in at any point of the day not just before or after school. This time can be agreed upon with the school and the parents as to what works with the child's schedule and the tutor. Either allow families who are able to pay for these tutors to come in or preferably require schools use an Orton Gillingham approved program for their special education rooms so that all families can benefit as opposed to only those who can pay for it.

Our struggles began in Kindergarten with no screening for Dyslexia at the school level. We navigated unclear areas for quite some time and sadly today we still have very little support from our school district. My children attend Scholls Heights in the Beaverton School District. I do really like the school and many of the programs offered for our children but the fact that Dyslexia is not recognized in the school setting is very upsetting. With 1 in 5 students having Dyslexia it seems wrong that schools would not be more proactive. If a student was blind you would not force them to see and read as a student with sight would, if a student was deaf you would not force them to listen but with a child who cannot read due to dyslexia you are forcing him or her to guess all of the time and lay the words improperly in their brain or you are forcing them to stand out in a crowd because they are not being supported which often leads to being picked on and low self-esteem.

After much research and consultations from professionals in the field we choose not to put our son in Special Education. We wanted our son to have a researched based program to help with dyslexia as opposed to a reading program that was designed to help those who are struggling but do not have dyslexia. These are two very different things and the brain needs to be trained in a very different way. This was a very hard decision for us as my husband is a Special Education teacher and we absolutely recognize the value special education provides, it just needs to be the right program.

Our district would not allow us to bring in a tutor at our own cost during the day and yet had no evidence based program to offer us for a Dyslexic child. We purchased the Barton program which could easily be used in the school setting. We tutor our son three to four times a week outside of the school setting but I will say it is very hard. As a young learner they can only handle so much and as a child struggling with Dyslexia the work is twice as hard for them so trying to do tutoring in the evening after a long school day is very hard.

I ask you to support SB 1002 but I also ask you not to stop there. Dyslexia needs a lot of support in Oregon. No parent should have to hear, "I am stupid", "I will never be able to read", "the kids pick on me because I can't read" especially when the child is working so hard to overcome this but getting very little support in our school system. Again, I do think Scholls Heights is a very good school but I do not think they are prepared to help a child with Dyslexia and I think this is largely due to a resource issue. This should not be an issue. If schools are willing to take on new programs such as Future Ready and many other flashy programs they should first be able to work with all of the students needs that they have.

Thank you,

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