

Audrey Drakos

April 25, 2019 Testimony for HB19-1134 – Senate Education Committee

Hi - My name is Audrey Drakos. I'm in 7th grade at Littleton Prep Charter School. I was diagnosed with dyslexia two and a half years ago, and I really struggled in 4th and 5th grade in public school. Even though my reading standardized test scores dropped every time I took them – from 77th to 44th percentile in a year and a half, I didn't qualify for an IEP and reading intervention because I was still not below grade level in reading. I was working so hard to stay at grade level – I don't believe one kid in my class worked as hard as I did.

Going into 6th grade, I moved to Littleton Prep. I received daily structured literacy instruction – that's the way of teaching that dyslexics need to learn to read. In one year, my reading scores jumped from the 42nd to 80th percentile. I read 1.4 million words last year. I have skipped two levels in Math and am now in Algebra, and I'm in Advanced Science, and even Advanced English and Advanced Literature. All I needed was structured literacy instruction that my previous school denied me because I wasn't failing enough.

If I had known that I was dyslexic in kindergarten and had been taught to read with structured literacy instruction, I wouldn't have felt dumb most of my life and I wouldn't have struggled and fallen behind. I could have read Harry Potter when all of my friends were in 4th grade instead of having to wait until 6th because I was not capable of reading those books in 4th grade.

It is so important for kids to be screened for dyslexia – the earlier, the better - and give them structured literacy instruction BEFORE they feel dumb and BEFORE they fall behind. I can see the difference between my little sister and I – she received the type of instruction that she needs and she is reading above grade level at 7 years old. I never had that chance.