

Senate Education

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SB23-181 Dyslexia Screening In Schools

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Cristine Robirds  For  themselves	<p>Senators, as a former elementary teacher in Colorado, now retired and a grandparent of a middle schooler with dyslexia, I implore you not to kill this bill. Yes, teachers are asked to do so much already, but there will be even more work for them to do with students who read below grade level, if we do not find these students early on in their school years. We cannot wait like we did with the scientific research of teaching reading, decades later. In the early 2000s when President George W. Bush put forth his Reading First initiative, backing the science of reading, educators pushed back because of the resources being pushed by big publishers, i.e. Fountas and Pinnel, Marie Clay and Lucy Calkins. These were all programs used in the state of Colorado during my years of teaching. It wasn't until I had a principal who had us trained in the teaching of phonics, did I see more growth in my K-2 students than what I had seen using these other programs mentioned above. We as a state must screen our youngest students, knowing that almost 20% of a school population has dyslexia and that they represent 80-90% of those with a learning disability. Now that we can screen for dyslexia why would we take another wait and see attitude just because the state of Colorado just recently instituted that teachers must be trained in the science of reading. Our dyslexic children have been told wait and see for so long, that now is the time to follow the science, and the science tells us the sooner we identify dyslexia the sooner we can provide them and their parents the instruction and resources they need to succeed. Enough of wait and see, they just need to mature, wait and see that you as a parent need to read more, provide more books to your child, wait and see we'll provide interventions after we spend months of observing, changing strategies, wait and see for the testing to see if a student identifies for extra interventions. We CANNOT wait and see any longer. Our children and our teachers can no longer wait for school districts to decide that these assessments are beneficial and our state needs to step up and provide for our students and teachers alike. This is a bi-partisan issue and I challenge all you, senators, to do what's right! Thank you.</p>
Tim Kelly  For  themselves	<p>Dear Colorado Senators, my daughter, Iris, has dyslexia. Her teacher (with 20 years of experience) says that he has never seen such strong mirroring. She will get public and private help until at least 7th grade. She was diagnosed late. We were ignorant and not told there was a problem.</p>

	<p>We got concerned when she was in 2nd grade and paid \$1k for a private diagnosis. It was overwhelmingly obvious (a 6-sigma case) that she has dyslexia. We still had to work hard to get her an IEP. The school district brought their lawyer. Fortunately, we had the money and the drive to make sure that my child would get the help she deserves.</p> <p>I think this screen is so important because parents can teach dyslexic children to read. Iris and I worked through 1,000s of pages of Barton (O-G curriculum). I believe that the school district doesn't want to screen because they are protective of their special ed services. They need to change their attitude to "Sorry, we have limited special ed resources, but here is the curriculum that works." Enable the parents and put children's needs first.</p> <p>Thanks for reading, Tim Kelly 303-246-7950</p>
<p>Emily Yoder-Horst For themselves</p>	<p>I am a reading interventionist and coach in Denver as well as a mother to a daughter who has not been officially diagnosed with dyslexia, but clearly has the indicators. My daughter is about to enter middle school in Cherry Creek Public Schools significantly behind grade level in reading. We first realized how far behind she was when she was in the second grade and home during remote learning. At that time I also had an opportunity to take Structured Literacy and Dyslexia courses through DPS and began putting together what was happening with her. We turned to her school to see if she could receive extra support. Up to that point, her school had not expressed to us that there were academic concerns, but once we brought it up she began receiving interventions and they quickly agreed that she should have an IEP. A Read Act Plan wasn't put in place until we brought up the issues we were seeing, and even after it was, it is unclear if any effective interventions were in place for her. At present it often feels like her teachers expect little from her when it comes to reading and writing because she can't keep up with grade level expectations and in fifth grade students are expected to be beyond foundational reading skills.</p> <p>Throughout her time in elementary school, she has become more anxious and her confidence in anything academic related and often social as well has diminished. Had early screening been in place along with consistent explicit instruction in foundational reading skills, I believe that she would not be moving into middle school reading years behind her grade level. At this point, we are thinking about moving across town on the off chance that she can get into the one public middle school program that we have been able to find that considers the extra support and continued intervention that students will need beyond elementary school. As a mom and as a teacher, it is hard to watch schools continuously failing children when it comes to reading, especially students who struggle and who will continue to struggle if we don't take action to identify dyslexia and intervene early.</p>

<p>K Frederking For themselves</p>	<p>My daughter was diagnosed with dyslexia/dysgraphia in 1st grade through private testing. I had noticed she did not progress with sounds and written words like the other children her age. Her kindergarten teacher noticed this too. The public school did not offer or provide testing for dyslexia. I had to pay thousands of dollars out-of-pocket for private testing and private Orton-Gillingham tutoring. During covid, my daughter fell further behind in reading, which necessitated getting a tutor additional hours per week, just to keep up with grade-level work. Fortunately, we have the ability to pay for ongoing and frequent private tutoring in science-based programming, like Orton-Gillingham. Without this private tutoring, I believe my daughter would be at least two grade levels behind. iReady and other standardized testing did not "catch" this reading difficulty. For those who cannot afford a large sum of money for testing and private tutoring - these children are being left behind. With dyslexia screening in schools, children would be identified early, able to get support/intervention early and succeed in school. We know how to "fix" this. Science-based reading programs exist and are easy to conduct. We just need public school funding, training and willingness to accomplish it.</p>
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