



Mark Desetti, Testimony
House Education Committee
February 7, 2018

House Bill 2602

Mister Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to discuss House Bill 2602.

We come before you today in support of the intent of this bill, but cannot support its passage without more information about how the proposed provisions would work in reality.

Like the people who come here in support, I too have a child who is dyslexic. He struggled in schools and went undiagnosed. Because he had two teachers for parents and nearly unlimited support from home and from great classroom teachers, he managed to do well until the work load became too much for him in high school. This bill would certainly help diagnose more children earlier and get them help.

We fully support Section 1, Subsection (a) even though we believe that much of the intent in this section is already being done. In any case, it does not hurt to review what is in place with an eye to improvement.

The other subsections raise too many questions for us to give you our full support at this time.

Subsection (b) raises many questions that we would like to know the answer to.

This subsection of the bill seems to suggest that all students shall be screened for dyslexia. There are, however, questions left unanswered.

- Are all students to be screened annually or is this a screening upon enrollment only? Is there an intent for there to be additional screenings later?
- If all students are to be screened as a matter of course, are schools prepared to conduct such screenings? Are there enough trained personnel in our schools to handle such screenings in a timely manner?
- If a school district screening suggests the child has dyslexia and the district then suggests that the student be evaluated by "a licensed physician, psychologist or psychiatrist" does the school district then have any obligation to pay for a follow up evaluation?

Subsection (c) carves out a special section of special education for dyslexia. We would argue that it is not necessary to set dyslexia aside from all other conditions. Students with dyslexia have a disability that is currently covered in special education.

In the case of my own son, he was diagnosed with dyslexia and dysgraphia by a licensed psychologist. We notified his school of the diagnosis and the school immediately convened a team to begin the IEP process. We believe that this is current practice and does not need to be codified as separate from all other disabling conditions.

We would suggest that this bill needs more discussion and would urge the committee not to pass the bill in its current form but to consider the questions we have raised here.