

February 5, 2018

Dear Mr. Aurand,

I am writing you today to call your attention to and plead with you to join fellow state reps to do something long overdue in the Kansas education system. The Kansas House and Senate have tried, and failed, multiple times to pass Dyslexia legislation that assures ALL Kansas kids are screened for dyslexia at an age early enough to get them appropriate instruction, and that that instruction is done in best practices, by educated teachers. Dyslexia is a brain difference that affects a solid 10% or more of all people, yet it doesn't get near the amount of attention it should considering the quantity of people, and Kansas kids, with it. It is now PAST time that Kansas has legislation to identify and instruct these kids. Due to these repeated failures Kansas remains as one of just 8 states left that do not mandate districts to address dyslexia. Fortunately, this 2018 House Session has the opportunity to fix this gap with HB 2602 that was just introduced.

If the most recent attempts, in the Kansas 2012-13 session, had succeeded, my daughter would've been properly identified in first grade and immediately gotten the proper instruction. Instead the bill failed yet again, and uninformed, misguided Kansas public school teachers from two different districts decided our daughter was a bright kid that 'just wasn't trying hard enough or paying attention', and not knowing any better and thinking schools know best, we believed them. At age 5, 6, 7 years old she spent hours being punished, forced to do school work she didn't understand, watching her peers catch on reading, writing, and math easy-peasy while she sat confused and frustrated and being labeled in 'struggling reader' groups. This sweet, well behaved, patient 5 year old girl HATED school, because while she was trying as hard as she could, her teachers, parents and peers were telling her she wasn't doing good enough.

It was 3 long years of misery for her and us as parents, until finally -but not until her third grade year- one reading specialist mentioned that maybe she's dyslexic, 'but there's nothing different we do about it so it doesn't really matter if she is'. That is true that that Kansas district doesn't do anything about it, however it is incredibly WRONG because when dyslexia is identified the district CAN and SHOULD do something about it. When dyslexic kids are properly instructed in a structured literacy curriculum starting around age 6-8, these kids succeed as well or better than their peers by the end of elementary school.

Had the bill passed in Kansas in 2013 and been implemented correctly, my daughter would have been finishing up best-practice curriculum the same school year that she instead was just then being identified as dyslexic, and the school subsequently outright refused to provide appropriate curriculum. We had countless meetings over 2 years

begging the district to implement curriculum appropriate for her and the other approximately 30 kids at the school needing it, even offering a full ride scholarship for a teacher to get trained, and the district refused. It would take effort to change things and they saw no reason to, because it was work, time, money, and the exact words from the superintendent were 'don't want to set a precedent' nor admit they were failing to provide a FAPE by making changes for the better based upon parental input. It didn't matter that this curriculum is scientifically proven to educate dyslexic kids and used in hundreds of other districts in this country, it didn't matter that there were at least 30 out of their 300 students that would benefit greatly from the change, it didn't matter that we advised them Kansas was one of few states left without these mandates and would soon follow the trend...the district didn't want to listen or change and Kansas education laws are not in place to direct them to.

This type of scenario plays out year after year in almost every district in our state when a parent discovers their child is Dyslexic and goes to advocate for their child and ask the district to train their teachers in structured literacy, the proven methods dyslexic kids need. I implore you, as an elected member of the House of Representatives for our state, to listen to me and the hundreds of other parents and teachers in Kansas who are now, in 2018, trying to finally get these changes passed and started at a state level. I don't want to have the kids born today or in preschool right now to go down the same path as my daughter and countless others have because of yet another Kansas legislation failure. Additionally, this legislation that you will pass will benefit kids currently in school and hopefully prevent further damage from inadequate instruction. Please support House Bill 2602 right now and encourage your fellow reps to as well.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter, and your public service as a House Representative. I am happy to provide more information or answer questions on the topic of Dyslexia should you have any.

Sincerely,

Melissa Webb

Cheney, KS

Mother to two dyslexic Kansans age 7 & 10