

February 18, 2018

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RE: Written testimony in support of HB 2602

My son struggled in reading and English classes in school. He is very bright and excelled in science and math and had no problem putting in the required effort. However, as he fell more and more behind in reading level and his grades, we began to despair that he would be able to attend college or otherwise reach his potential.

At our request, the school developed an IEP for him and made accommodations, but there was no diagnosis or plan to actually improve his abilities, just ways to "lower the bar". We were told he was behind but could catch up with more effort and time.

More effort did not work. He hated reading and could not get better at it. Forced reading time just made him more miserable. Finally, on our own we had him outside tested for dyslexia and began therapy. He improved greatly and is now attending Kansas State University, majoring in Unmanned Aircraft Systems.

While this may sound like the system working, the truth is that he was not diagnosed until middle school after a lot of struggle. The school system did not have a program for screening or diagnosing dyslexia. It is my understanding that they cannot screen or diagnose this and actively avoid doing so. The also did not have any options for therapy. We were able to obtain private dyslexia therapy but this is expensive and therapists are scarce and hard to find. There have to be many, many kids falling through this Grand Canyon sized crack in the educations system.

At a time when jobs that don't require extensive reading abilities to succeed are becoming scarce due to automation, we need to do everything we can to maximize our children's abilities to succeed in life and careers. If not we will pay for it with unemployed and underemployed adults who could have done so much more. Tell them to work harder will not fix it. Dyslexia is a neurologic problem that improves with therapy....not providing it will hurt us all.

Sincerely,

Chad Winters