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Sent: Friday, February 26, 2021 9:10 AM
To: Kate Webb; Larry Cupoli; Peter Conlon; John Arrison; Sarita Austin; Erin Brady; Jana Brown; Jay Hooper; Kathleen James; Casey Toof; Terri Williams
Cc: Jessi Tracy; Brian Champion; Cheryl Hooker; Andrew Perchlik; Virginia Lyons; Thomas Chittenden; Joshua C. Terenzini
Subject: [External] Mary Lundeen's testimony
Attachments: IEP_data.pdf

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Dear Chair Webb and members of the House Education Committee:

Literacy instruction is a complex issue. Thank you for your continued efforts to provide educational support to improve our literacy outcomes.

Mary Lundeen of the Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators testified to the importance of teacher training to affect system change. Teacher training is going to be critical to transforming our literacy instruction.

Mary Lundeen also testified that screening for dyslexia was not necessary as Response to Intervention (RtI) under the umbrella of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) already provides this type of screening.

How can we reduce the number of high school seniors who have difficulty reading, who are no longer being remediated and who need accommodations just to access their educational content as Representative Brady sees in our high schools?

Vermont's largest disability group is children with specific learning disabilities (SLD). Approximately 85% of SLD students have an impairment in reading. As data from the Vermont Agency of Education shows in the first chart in the attached [PDF document](#), the majority of SLD students are not getting support from an IEP until third, fourth and fifth grades.

To qualify for IEP support, SLD students must have a discrepancy of 1.5 standard deviations or greater below average. This is the lowest 7% of all students. If current educational practice can not even identify and support the majority of the lowest 7% of students (who mostly struggle with reading, until after third grade) how can we identify and support the rest of the 63% of our students who are not proficient in reading by fourth grade? How does H.101 address this very real problem without mandating early universal screening?

This data illustrates the importance of implementing universal screening for struggling readers in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first and second grades.

Universal screening is also a question of equity. The second chart in the attached [PDF document](#) shows more male than female SLD children are on IEPs. Yet, studies find no significant difference in the prevalence of dyslexia between male and female children (Ref: See Figure 1, p. 148 in Dyslexia (specific reading disability). Shaywitz SE, Shaywitz BA. *Pediatr Rev* 24(5):147-153, 2003). Many girls are not being identified.

The National Council on Teacher Quality [recommends](#) a number of skills-based screeners and assessments. The Council specifically does not recommend certain other screeners and assessments. Fountas & Pinnell is not recommended, yet is currently in use in many Vermont schools. Can these recommendations be incorporated into H.101?

In responding to a question from Representative James, Mary Lundeen agrees that students with reading difficulties need "[a structured literacy approach and teachers need to be taught how to do that.](#)" To make sure our children get the most appropriate instructional method, shouldn't "structured literacy" be incorporated into H.101?

Thank you for considering my suggestions. I would be happy to testify to expand on any of my comments or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

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