

Good afternoon and thank you to Chairman Campion and the rest of the committee for taking the time to hear from me today.

My name is Jeffrey Leake from Shaftsbury. I am a parent of a learner with dyslexia, a school board member, and a spouse of a teacher. So, I come wearing many hats.

I do not support the delay in implementing rules 2362 or 2362.2.5 until July 2023. A delay will ultimately deny students with disabilities the right to early identification, evaluation, and special education and related services. Currently, special education determination requires that a student fall below the 15th percentile of their grade-level peers, before supports are provided. This July, Vermont will move away from the waiting to fail model. Returning to the eligibility definition of adverse effect which most other states follow. This will rely on evidence-based results, student progress measures, and examples of student work, including the effect of functional skill deficits, which demonstrates that the student's disability has a negative impact on their basic skill or basic skill development. This will place the focus back on the education and functional needs of the student.

As a board member, it is my responsibility to ensure the local education agency is providing educational services in accordance with any State or Federal laws. The Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union (SVSU) has been working hard on the MTSS

implementation manual (for the school year 2021-2022.) This comprehensive, integrated, three-tiered model of prevention will ensure that academic and behavioral supports are in place to assist all students to meet the state standards.

I am a parent of a learner with dyslexia. Under our current system, I often worry about what it will mean when my child gets to the 16th percentile. She will still be significantly below her peers in her reading and writing skill, will she lose the support that will ultimately help her to continue to learn and grow. As parents we all have hopes and dreams for our children, my greatest fear is her losing her support and falling through the education cracks. As many children currently do.

As a spouse, I understand why districts want to delay rules 2362.2.5. We are entering a crisis with our teachers. With teacher shortages and high demands on current teachers. I often see my wife working 60-70 hours a week trying to meet her students where they are at (often spanning many grade levels in a single subject area). With the rule changes, students will receive services earlier, giving them a greater chance of reaching their full potential. Research is clear early intervention is more efficient and effective at younger ages, it is much harder for older students to close the gaps. Bringing more students onto grade level earlier will actually help my wife as a middle school teacher.

I look forward to the implementation of the rule change on schedule for July 2022, so that all students will receive the instruction they need; when they need it; improving the learning and climate for all students and teachers.