

Dear Senators,

Thank you for taking up S.75, an act relating to screening students for dyslexia. As a parent of four children with dyslexia, please accept this testimony. My daughter Rita was diagnosed with dyslexia in first grade. Rita's teachers did not know how to help her. I moved from one school district Highgate (a lower-ranking school) to Montgomery (High ranking school) thinking that the higher-ranking school would be able to help her.

I journeyed with Rita and recently graduated with a graduate degree in the Foundations of Education from Northern Vermont University. This degree did not prepare me to teach structured literacy though I enjoyed learning about pedagogy. Please include evidence-based structured literacy standards for Higher Ed.

I became a special educator, and it was harder for me to advocate for structured phonics instruction for my students (as an insider) than to advocate for my children.

As a special educator, I deeply experienced the "reading war" that we hear whispered. The "war" is amongst colleagues who are unable to find middle ground about programming for students. The union is a proponent for balanced literacy (in the school I worked in) and was unhelpful. I succumbed to the system and gave my notice because I could not ethically teach using methodology that had already failed my students. I urge you to include the union (especially administration) in teacher training.

FastForward nine years after Rita was identified. Rita told her education team that she wanted to drop out of school. She was transitioning to high school. The high school administrator said, "A lot of kids say that." We need training for administrators. Statistics shows a large number of students who drop out have unremediated literacy needs. Please include training for administrators.

Rita's recent neuropsych evaluation stated: "Rita's current reading and writing skills are not sufficient for managing basic life demands (e.g., completing job applications, understanding healthcare consent forms, etc.) or college-level coursework, nor are they on a trajectory that will allow for that. Intensive remediation will be a critical component of her plan." Rita has a solid average IQ, and when you take language out of her testing, she is in the superior range. She has abilities that can positively contribute to our society. Please help students with dyslexia by championing this bill, including teacher training, training for administrators to include the union, and updating high ed standards.

I am available to help if needed.

Thank you for reading this testimony and for all the time you are spending on the screen during this session.

Respectfully,

Brittany Lovejoy