

My name is Allison Southerland. I am a parent of a child with Dyslexia from Gardner, KS.

I am writing to you today to bring your attention to the need for Dyslexia Legislation in Kansas. Kansas is one of 8 states in the United States without Dyslexia Legislation! Representatives Tom Cox and Shelee Brimm are currently working on a House Dyslexia Bill and I would love you to support their efforts!

There is a gap between what is known about dyslexia and what is currently available in our education laws. Dyslexia affects 1 in 5, but only about 5% are ever identified. Our teachers need to be given the advantage of dyslexia training and dyslexia intervention as part of their teacher training. Dyslexia is not my child's problem; lack of early intervention and appropriate instruction has left my child feeling defeated and stupid. The struggle to receive identification and appropriate intervention for our child who is dyslexic unfortunately is not uncommon to Kansans.

At the beginning of second grade, my typically joyful, bubbly, adventurous student began coming home each day in a puddle of sadness and despair. We endured anger, tears, outbursts, defiance, and even some violence. If that sounds dramatic, that's exactly how it was! It was as if a switch flipped when we transitioned from summer vacation back to school. After much investigation, I discovered she had been taking tests for an entire week - which she could not read - but no one was allowed to read it to her. She spent hours just clicking at random. This was after a YEAR of struggling in first grade, and my husband and I raising our concerns at parent/teacher conferences. I'm told these tests are designed to catch students who need help. But it did not! Our daughter had been seeing the reading specialist for over a year, but the reading specialist did not have the knowledge, skill, or resources to help with dyslexia. Let me say that again in case you missed it: **THE SCHOOL READING SPECIALIST DID NOT HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILL, OR RESOURCES TO HELP WITH DYSLEXIA!!!** We took her to a children's hospital to have her tested and diagnosed with dyslexia because the school could not do that. Ever since then, I have had to fight tooth and nail for my child to get the help she needs. The school still does not have the ability to appropriately help her. The district is unequipped and not supported by legislation. Our daughter is only getting what she needs through additional tutoring AFTER school. Her tutor offered to come to the school for 20 minutes of daily instruction, but that was not allowed. So AFTER my daughter sits IN SCHOOL for 8 hours, she has to go to the dyslexic tutor to learn how to read and spell. Not only does she not get her whole afternoon to just PLAY like a normal 8 year old, (and that is heartbreaking!) but it is VERY EXPENSIVE. We are paying thousands of dollars out of pocket, above our tax monies, to pay for the services she should receive at school for free. But the truth is, she's one of the lucky ones who has engaged parents who try to give her what she needs. MANY MORE children do not have this luxury. Their success depends COMPLETELY upon their time in public school. I am sad. I am angry. This should be a top priority! Dyslexic students are NOT stupid, despite how they're made to feel at school. In fact, most are above average intelligence! They have to work exponentially harder and they still fall behind. Imagine a world where our most genius creators, such as Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, Steven Spielberg, and Bill Gates, are deemed sub-par by our school system. All those men were/are dyslexic! NASA employs a high ratio of dyslexic people. Hear me loud and clear, our kids are not broken, **OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM IS BROKEN**. Please help us take a step toward fixing it.

I can think of no greater need facing the great state of Kansas than the needs of our children. It hurts my heart that Kansas is one of eight states within the United States without Dyslexia Legislation!

I implore you to act immediately on the needs of our children and address the lack of Dyslexia screening, teacher training, and appropriate instruction that is needed to ensure our Dyslexic Students can bridge the learning gap to become successful!

Please support legislation that will ensure these Kansans are successful in school and in life!

Thank you for your time!
Allison Southerland