

Hello. My name is Cathy O'Shea. I am a resident of Spring Hill, KS. I am a parent of a 10 year-old boy with Dyslexia.

I am writing you today to bring your attention to the need for Dyslexia Legislation in our great state of Kansas. Kansas is 1 of 8 states without Dyslexia Legislation.

Despite Dyslexia affecting 1 in 5 kids many go unidentified. Only about 5 % of kids are identified with Dyslexia. My son's seasoned SPED teacher and his 3rd grade teacher told me that my son is the only child they have ever had that has been diagnosed with Dyslexia. His SPED teacher added that there were many they suspected had Dyslexia over the years. That is a lot of children failing to receive the help they need to learn to read. This statement shocked me since his school has over 400 children each year. Our teachers need more support with Dyslexia training and Dyslexia Intervention. My son has had some amazing teachers over the years, but they admit they have little knowledge about Dyslexia. I feel like it is my responsibility or burden to educate them on what my son needs each year. I find it disheartening that our teachers have such little knowledge about an extremely common learning disability.

I cannot possibly put into words the amount of stress I have endured, hours of research I spent, or tears I cried trying to figure out why my child struggled to read. Not to mention the wasted hours we spent working with him trying to get him at grade level. My son was frustrated and heartbroken that he could not read like his friends. He was so excited to start school in Kindergarten because he wanted to learn to read. He too has cried many tears in frustration. In second grade he brought home a Harry Potter book from the school book-exchange. He looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, "Why I can't I read this book like my friends?"

In first grade we were alerted that he was behind in mastering his sight words. We worked hard with him on them. It did not help. In 2nd grade his teacher called at the beginning of the year to let us know his MAP scores had plummeted below average and his Dibels scores were below benchmark. It was the first year he had to read the MAP test on his own. She also informed me he was only reading at a Kindergarten grade level. I said to his 2nd grade teacher, "If you know what the problem please just tell me". She did not know and offered suggestions of other possibilities. I decided I needed to have eyes checked first. That led to me to being referred by our regular Optometrist to a Behavioral Optometrist. I was told they would test him for Dyslexia and vision disorders. We paid hundreds of dollars out of pocket (not covered by insurance) to have him tested. He was diagnosed with a vision disorder. We were told we would have to complete 6 months of vision therapy before we could truly know if he had Dyslexia. Starting in January we paid for 6 months of therapy that cost over \$1000 out of pocket. We also spent 3 months doing vision therapy at home. This brought us to the start of 3rd grade. We again received a call from his 3rd grade teacher in the first few weeks of school. He tested way below benchmark on his Dibels and MAP test again. Vision therapy had not fixed the problem. We were heart broken. I requested that the school

evaluate him. I found out that Children's Mercy diagnoses Dyslexia. I called in August and received a mid November appointment. That is how far they book out. I was blessed to be able to get into a cancelled appointment in October. They finally confirmed that my child had Dyslexia. This cost us over \$600 out of pocket.

Finally a diagnosis! I thought, we will get to work on getting him the help he needs. The reality set in when his teacher informed us that even though he was reading at a first grade level in the third grade that he would most likely not receive an IEP because his grades were not low enough. His IQ is in the Highly Intelligent category. He was able to compensate in some areas. We were also warned by many other Dyslexic parents that the schools would never do enough. We didn't want to waste any more time. We decided to hire a Barton Tutor. This will cost us \$9000 out of pocket for the two years it will take to complete the program. We struggle to pay this each year. We were lucky to get a Barton Tutor though. I know many kids who are on a waiting list for one.

A month after Children's Mercy's diagnosis the school finished their evaluation and said due to his IQ that his deficits were due to a Learning Disorder. They offered him an IEP. Unfortunately they did not offer a multi-sensory program. I researched the phonics program his school offered. It was not a well-reviewed program in all of my research. It is not geared towards Dyslexics. I even asked an educator well versed in Dyslexia. This person told me that it was not a good program. Our Barton tutor also agreed it would not help. We decided to continue with our tutor.

My son is now in the 4th grade. He has been in Barton Tutoring for 16 months. It has been an amazing program for our child! His first two quarters in school this year he has had all A's except for a B in reading. Our journey to get our son to this point will end up costing us \$12,000. None of this has been covered by insurance. We have had to make many sacrifices over the last two years.

I don't want any other parents or children to have to go through the journey my family has had to endure. Most families simply cannot afford it. I hope that you will sincerely consider this legislation. Kansas needs early identification programs. Kansas needs a multi-sensory, structured, cumulative literacy program that will build a foundation in phonics to help all readers. Teachers need more training. I am hopeful that Task Force will help improve education for Dyslexic students like my son.

Thank you for your time.

Cathy O'Shea
oshea.cl07@hotmail.com
20793 S Skyview Lane
Spring Hill, KS 66083
913-592-4508