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Written Testimony in support of HB 2602

As a parent you never want to learn that something may be different about your child, so you live in a denial. Some parents never come out of that denial, others, realize there is a problem and seek help. If not for a good friend of mine, I can't be for certain which parent I would have turned out to be.

My daughter started kindergarten and I could tell that she was struggling with learning her letters and sounds. I assumed it was a lack of working with her daily before she started. I thought, this is my fault because I didn't work with her enough. So I started working with her more and I would see her trying to think of the correct letter or sound and give me a blank look or get frustrated with herself. I chalked it up to her not liking it because it was harder for her and she just didn't want to try or she was just being lazy.... All of these thoughts I would later regret when I found the true reason.

In Kindergarten the school took her out of class daily for an hour. So my little anxiety filled 5 year old who cried everyday when I took her into school was not only feeling a ton of anxiety about this big school but now was being pulled out and asked daily by her peers why she was being pulled out and where she was going. This only fueled her anxiety.

By first grade I was noticing that she always flipped her b's and d's and when she was talking she would say with instead of if, she still wasn't tying her own shoes. And I still felt that her reading skills were lacking just because she didn't want to work on it. Her teacher noticed these things and said he wanted to have her evaluated by the speech therapist. I agreed. She began getting speech therapy along with her reading support in school. I still didn't understand why my smart, sassy, quick witted child would not put in the effort to read!

By third grade, she had been tutored over the summer by her second grade teacher and was still not progressing. She was in the intensive level on her assessments. And that's when my good friend started researching and advocating for her son who was dyslexic. I would listen to her battles for an IEP and accommodations for her son and my heart would ache for them. And then pieces of her puzzle started to fill in my own missing pieces of my daughters puzzle. I started looking at her examples of kids with dyslexia and signs and I could check them off like a list for my daughter. I sat down at a birthday party with her one day and voiced my concerns for my daughter. I was relieved and heartbroken at the same time when she said, we should have our daughter tested. A light bulb had gone off finally on why our daughter struggled to read and that same light bulb made me feel as if I had been failing my daughter.

I sat down with my daughter and we watched The Big Picture, Rethinking Dyslexia. I had not voiced my suspicions to my daughter yet because I wanted her to watch the film and see how she felt about it. Once we were finished watching the movie, my little 3<sup>rd</sup> grader, said "Mom, can I be tested for Dyslexia?" So we made the appointment with Childrens Mercy and at the end of her 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade year she was diagnosed as dyslexic! Finally, some answers!!! Now how to help her?

I turned to my friend and she helped us look at accommodations for school and tutoring programs. Luckily my family is able to provide our daughter with private tutoring on the Barton program so now my now 5<sup>th</sup> grade daughter is close to grade level with her reading! But there is so much more that can and should be done in the schools! There are so

many kids that their families would not be able to afford the tutoring necessary for their child to learn to read. The programs being used in the schools are NOT for dyslexics. They are not multi-sensory programs. With the statistics of 1 in 5 children being dyslexic that would mean that 124 students in my child's school could be dyslexic! 124!!! And yet there is not a program specific to dyslexia available to schools. Teachers are not trained on what dyslexia even is or how to spot it or help these students! That is unacceptable!

The programs being taught in the reading support are helping my child in the moment but she is not retaining the methods used because they are not multi-sensory methods which is what is proven to help dyslexic.

I tried having a meeting this year with everyone involved in my daughter's learning, her teachers, her reading specialists, the district psychologist, and our private tutor. My hope was that we could all get in the same page as to what we all could be doing to help my daughter get better and raise up in her assessment testing... this was not the case. The school seemed very defensive and close minded on the specifics of the child NEEDS to learn to read and defended their programs. Needless to say we walked out of there feeling that we were on our own. The schools will do their thing and we will continue to tutor her outside of school.

Our school district is taking steps to catch kids early who may be dyslexic but the steps they are taking in the elementary schools will not help my daughter who will be in middle school by the time they are implemented in all the schools.

Supporting HB 2602 is a good start to helping the many of children out there that will have dyslexia and hopefully will start a process where children are not being lost in the crowd of students who have reading issues that can be corrected with the school programs. My hopes with this is that other children and parents don't have to go years feeling like they failed! That kid will be diagnosed early and schools will be trained and implement correct learning programs for dyslexic children.

Thank you for your time.

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