



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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June 24, 2015

The Honorable Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 111
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

RE: S.312, An Act to address the special education needs of children with dyslexia

Dear Chair Chang-Diaz and Chair Peisch,

I write in support of S.312, *An Act to address the special education needs of children with dyslexia*. This important piece of legislation would require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to recognize Dyslexia through a consistent scientific definition. The first step to help solve the problem of Dyslexia is to accept Dyslexia for what it is.

Currently, DESE does not recognize Dyslexia with a scientific definition. As soon as we understand the science behind what makes reading so challenging for those with Dyslexia, the sooner more specialized treatment can be offered to those struggling students. Due to a lack of an accepted scientific definition, many children are held back in school or labeled with a false diagnosis. These students are misdiagnosed and then mistreated with programs and special education support that do not cater to their Dyslexia. This is enormously frustrating for both the child in need and the child's parents.

Dyslexia is a reading disability and it only impairs a child's ability to read letters and numbers. Having Dyslexia does not mean that the child has a lower level of IQ. Dyslexia is the most common learning disability, and it does not improve with time or more effort; it requires quality intervention. It affects as many as 5-17% of children in the United States. It is associated with reduced self-esteem, vocabulary, and academic achievement. It also is known to lead to dropping out of school, depression, and suicide attempts. This is a very prevalent disorder and its severity calls for our immediate attention and action.

Thank you for your consideration, please contact me or my staff if you have any questions or would like to discuss this bill further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie B. Eldridge" followed by a stylized flourish.

Jamie Eldridge

State Senator

Middlesex & Worcester District