

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, ROOM 23, BOSTON 02133-1054

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June 30, 2015

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

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

Dear Chairwoman Chang-Diaz and Chairwoman Peisch,

I write in support of **House Bill 463**, An Act relative to providing screening for dyslexia. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that each student enrolled in a school district is screened for potential indicators of dyslexia or other reading disabilities.

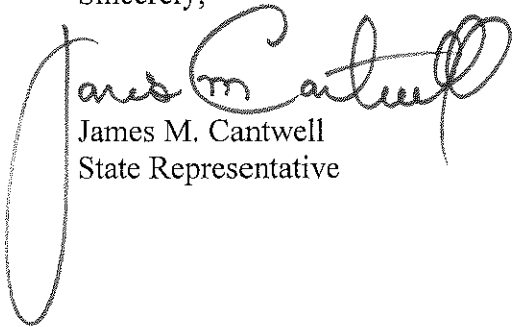
The academic success and lifetime achievements of our children depend on creating a supportive learning environment. We can proudly say that Massachusetts has one of the most respected educational systems in the United States, however, 43% of our third graders are not reading at grade level. This is an alarming statistic as a student's reading proficiency in the third grade is the most significant predictor of their future academic success. Furthermore, dyslexia is the most common learning disability, affecting 5-17% of U.S. children. Dyslexia's prevalence demonstrates the need for programs that encourage early intervention. By requiring the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to adopt early screening programs for dyslexia and other reading disabilities, we can ensure our children with reading disabilities are not left behind and receive the support they need to be successful.

House Bill 463 will require districts to screen students enrolled in the school district for potential indicators of dyslexia or other reading disabilities no later than the first semester of the second grade. A report released by the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2011 states, "When intervention began in the first grade, the expected incidence of reading disability of 12% -18% was reduced substantially to 1.6% -6%." With the success of early intervention programs, H.463

will enable the Massachusetts school system to lower the incidences of reading disabilities, and reduce the other issues associated with dyslexia and other reading disabilities, including reduced self-esteem, vocabulary, and academic achievement. The early interventions may also help reduce other associated long term factors such as entry into the justice system, school dropouts, depression, and suicide attempts.

I respectfully request favorable action on H.463, and thank you for your efforts on this piece of legislation. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James M. Cantwell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name and title.

James M. Cantwell
State Representative