

Caroline Kagnaov, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Support SB567, SB568

My name is Caroline Kaganov and I am the mom of a child who struggles with literacy. My child is currently in 9th grade, he was diagnosed with dyslexia in 1st grade but not given evidence based structured literacy intervention, instead, to figure out words on a page he was asked "what word make's sense there" teaching him to guess. When my child was in 5th grade while his peers where reading to learn new information, my child was still struggling to learn to read so new information was not being learned, and the gap was continuing to widen.

In his most recent Multidisciplinary evaluation team report competed by the public school his reading score was at the 3rd percentile. As his parents we paid for outside intervention in structured literacy but at school he was being instructed to, "look at the word and see what makes sense in there" or "read ahead and go back and see what word would work". With this continued ineffective instruction, breaking the bad guessing habit is hard, and so, when he sees a multisyllable word, his instinct is to try what he was taught in school first. Let me give you an example of why this is detrimental, in a recent grade level history article that was used to assess his reading, he read the word contrast in place of constitution, he replaced legislature with legislation and Senate with section, all these errors still made sense in the sentence but not for the comprehension of what the author intended. As you can see my child's comprehension suffered from this "what word makes sense" approach. When I read with him and give him explicit instruction not to guess. I say "you know how to decode, use your letter sound knowledge, break down the word into syllables, with these explicit instructions his reading accuracy improves. My child is a 4.0 student because he uses his accommodations, but this doesn't erase the fact that he is in the 3rd percentile for reading. Teaching kids to guess the words based on the context of the sentence is a dis-service. We continue to learn and grow over time finding new and more powerful ways to do things and the teaching of reading is no exception. We now know how to better teach reading and we need to ensure that we use this knowledge in the classroom.

Dyslexia is not rare, it affects a startlingly large percentage of the population, 1 in 5 Americans have some form of dyslexia. In an average sized classroom that equates to 5 students struggling to access the curriculum. If you can't read, you can't access the curriculum in a meaningful way and that has potentially devastating outcomes. While dyslexia impacts learning, it is not an issue of intelligence. People with dyslexia are just as intelligent as their peers.

We can make a difference if we identify children with dyslexic traits early and get them the evidence-based intervention they need in structured literacy. If we wait to intervene then we have many more issues to address, we have children who feel inferior due to their inability to read when in reality if given the right intervention they would be readers. We have children with behavioral issue because it's easier to be perceived as the bad kid, than the kid who can't read. We have children who are behind in the curriculum because they couldn't access it because they can read, so we essentially have a knowledge gap. Let's ensure these students get what they need early when it is most beneficial to both their education and their self-esteem.

I have been talking with Senator Irwin since April 2016 about the need for literacy bills in Michigan. In that time Michigan fell from 32nd in 2019 to 43rd in fourth grade reading scores on the 2022 National Assessment for Educational Progress. This puts our state at the 7th worst in the nation for 4th grade reading scores. We are failing our children. These literacy bills will help improve those numbers. These bills would ensure appropriate assessment not more assessments. We want the teachers to have the right tools.

I am not asking you to change this for my child. He will be long graduated before anything is truly different, but I implore you to recognize the sense of urgency in making change happen now. It's time we stopped letting 1 in 5 children fall through the cracks. The ability to access the curriculum in our public schools starts with the ability to read. Access to literacy should not depend on if your parent has the funds to pay for outside tutoring or if your parent has the knowledge to fight the school for the correct intervention. When reading rates are assessed across school districts in our state, we need to take into consideration that some districts are more affluent, and the numbers are skewed by parents paying for outside intervention but again a child's ability to learn to read should not depend on their zip code. The public school should be a safety net.

As a state we are required to provide a free and appropriate public education for every child. We need to ensure every child can read at a proficient level. Let's give these children the chance to show us their true potential.

Thank you to this education committee for listening to my comments and concerns and working towards improving literacy in our state.

Caroline Kaganov
Mom of child with dyslexia

<https://michiganadvance.com/2023/01/11/report-michigan-stuck-in-bottom-10-states-for-4th-grade-reading-test-scores/>

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-funded-study-finds-dyslexia-not-tied-ig>

Legan Rose

From: Marisa Varga <marisa_varga@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 2, 2024 10:01 PM
To: Legan Rose
Cc: Rep. Joe Tate (District 10); Rep. Matt Koleszar (District 22); Rep. Jaime Churches (District 27); Rep. Nate Shannon (District 58); Rep. Regina Weiss (District 6); Rep. Carol Glanville (District 84); Rep. Jennifer A. Conlin (District 48); Rep. Kimberly Edwards (District 12); Rep. Dylan Wegela (District 26); Rep. Jaime Greene (District 65); Rep. Greg Markkanen (District 110); Rep. Brad Paquette (District 37); Rep. Pauline Wendzel (District 39); Rep. Gina Johnsen (District 78)
Subject: Support of Senate Bills 567 and 568
Attachments: Screenshot 2024-06-02 at 9.38.59 PM.png; Screenshot 2024-06-02 at 9.40.36 PM.png; Screenshot 2024-06-02 at 9.39.24 PM.png

Good Evening,

My name is Marisa Varga, I live in Farmington Hills, Michigan with my husband, son (12) and daughter (9). Our kids are finishing 6th and 4th grade in Farmington Public Schools at East Middle School and Hillside Elementary School.

My daughter, Maryn, spent half of Kindergarten and all of first grade in remote learning due to the pandemic. In first grade her teacher shifted four times. Towards the end of first grade, Maryn's teacher recognized that she had also been lost in the shuffle and her reading levels were off and gave her some extra attention through the summer.

In second grade, she continued to have challenges and onto third grade. She had great teachers and she was eager to learn, had a great verbal vocabulary and solid comprehension. But she couldn't read, couldn't read aloud without getting upset and frustrated and was challenged with spelling.

Her teachers, not trained in identifying dyslexia, continued to tell me it was her "tracking" and that she possibly had visual challenges, she saw an optometrist and ophthalmologist. Her vision was not the issue and there was no appropriate testing available.

The summer before fourth grade I became uneasy that we had all missed something. My family had to spend \$3,000 at McCaskill Family Services in Plymouth and after a thorough evaluation through nine hours of testing over several days. She was diagnosed with Dyslexia.

I immediately began private tutoring (slightly before the diagnosis even because I knew I needed to finally trust my gut) immediately. Going into fourth grade we needed to get as far in front of the dyslexia as we could because I want her to be prepared for everything that comes with middle school. Maryn goes through Orton Gillingham tutoring, three times a week for one hour sessions. Which costs us \$150 per week, that's approximately an extra \$7,500 per year that we are spending to support our daughter (accounting for a few weeks off for breaks/vacation). So, an extra \$10,500 spent over the past year with testing.

We then went through attempting to get an IEP - which was denied because she wasn't deemed far enough behind (in fourth grade reading at near a second grade level apparently isn't bad enough). And also, the school - regardless of how large our district is - doesn't have the support or resources.

Our family while fortunate enough to be able to afford these services - will still feel that. How many families out there have their children with reading disabilities and/or dyslexia can't afford to get this expensive testing and specific tutoring? I would say most cannot afford it and their kids will continue to struggle.

Maryn has made great strides - because of us - because I knew that she needed better so we went out and got it for her. The State and the school district did nothing. We are also extremely fortunate to have easy access to tutors and advocates through our friendships, neighbors and sports community - two very good friends serve as her tutors for OG and Math - also experts in their field and full time educators.

Maryn, like most girls with dyslexia, was extremely resourceful and built some of her own strategies avoiding anyone's ability to pinpoint what might be going on with her. You would love to meet her - she is smart, vibrant, energetic, she is a top swimmer and gymnast in the State. She has many friends and so much creativity - she loves to draw and enjoys reading and math - even more so now, due to her extra support, she better understands how to read it all in the way works for her.

In the United States, 5-10% of the population has dyslexia. 5-10% is well worth supporting prescreening for dyslexia in schools with SB567 - it is entirely overdue. How can you ignore the needs of potentially 160,000 school children?

On the backend of it all - consider this opportunity to be preventative - 30% of the prison population is dyslexic, with up to 60% having general literacy challenges. What would those people's lives been like if they had been prescreened and given some form of greater support for literacy success?

Prescreening for dyslexia will build a return for the State of Michigan with better and more prepared students, setting kids up for success. In a January 2023 article, Stephen Straus stated - The cost of incarceration in the U.S. is more than \$1 trillion per year in first and second-order costs, which equates to a cost of \$480 billion per year for incarcerating dyslexics. Why is the number of people with dyslexia in jail so high?

Because we fail them in kindergarten, first and second grade when we don't identify them as dyslexic or teach them to read in a way they can learn. And then because they don't want to be made fun of or seen as failures, they either act out, become the class clown, or try to fly under the radar. For those that act out, especially if they are a little Black or Brown kid, they are labelled as troublemakers and start down the school to prison pipeline.

<https://medium.com/impactdyslexia/48-of-people-in-jail-are-dyslexic-and-how-to-help-them-3d2712556185>

At the same time, In one UK study, researchers discovered that around 40% of millionaires classified as self-made are dyslexic. At least 25% of most CEOs are dyslexic, even though they may not be aware of it.

People with dyslexia can become extremely successful or end up going down different paths if not educated, nurtured and supported. They deserve better and so does Maryn.

Please support these Senate Bills - my daughter and so many others would've been identified much sooner. We screen for eyesight, hearing, scoliosis - reading and literacy and dyslexia screening is equally as important.

Thank you for your consideration and time,
Marisa Varga
248-331-6716

More dyslexia facts....

Around 1 out of 10 people have dyslexia.

780 million people in the entire world are dyslexic.

More than 40 million US adults have dyslexia, with only 2 million of them receiving a diagnosis.

Between 70% and 80% of people harboring limited reading proficiency suffer from dyslexia.

Around 60% of people with dyslexia are men.

5% of all adults in the US are functionally illiterate.

About 25% of adults read at an elementary school level.

The high school dropout rate for kids with reading problems is 62%.

Kids with ADHD account for 30% of those that are also dyslexic.

One of the most famous scientists, Albert Einstein, was dyslexic.

Others: Picasso, Steve Jobs, Agatha Christie, Magic Johnson, Anthony Hopkins, Steven Spielberg, Tom Holland, Keanu Reeves, Anderson Cooper, Octavia Spencer, Walt Disney, Whoopi Goldberg, Cher, Jennifer Aniston,

Legan Rose

From: C.J. Snow <c.j.snow734@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 2, 2024 9:38 PM
To: Legan Rose
Cc: Rep. Joe Tate (District 10); Rep. Matt Koleszar (District 22); Rep. Jaime Churches (District 27); Rep. Nate Shannon (District 58); Rep. Regina Weiss (District 6); Rep. Carol Glanville (District 84); Rep. Jennifer A. Conlin (District 48); Rep. Kimberly Edwards (District 12); Rep. Dylan Wegela (District 26); Rep. Jaime Greene (District 65); Rep. Greg Markkanen (District 110); Rep. Brad Paquette (District 37); Rep. Pauline Wendzel (District 39); Rep. Gina Johnsen (District 78)
Subject: SB 567 & SB 568

Good Evening Ms. Rose,

My name is C.J. Snow. I'm a K-5 Reading Specialist in Washtenaw County; additionally, I'm the Lead Reading Specialist for my district of eleven schools.

I'm pleased for the opportunity to write to you in support of Senate bills 567 & 568.

Although I support this legislation, my concern is how SB 567 was amended to push back the effective date to the 2027-2028 school year because as Sen. Jeff Irwin stated, "...our school systems are a big machine. They're a big ship that's hard to turn."

Yet, the research has been in public view for years. Our teachers and parents have been calling for change for nearly a decade. While our students have continued to receive supports that do not work; interventions based on curricula that have been shown to be ineffective and based on misguided research. Further, the concepts of these bills are not new. Similar efforts have been introduced in Lansing several sessions ago.

So, the "big ship" has had plenty of warnings to change course. The Titanic had six warnings that final day, yet ignored them while remaining full speed ahead.

In the meantime, thousands of educators across Michigan, including myself, have spent the last few years doing something: LETRS training. We've been doing this on our own, with the support of the \$40 million in MDE grants, because in many cases our districts/schools would not support us. Yet, mention of LETRS was removed in the senate amended bill. Many districts are simply not willing to accept anything related to the science of reading because they have invested millions of dollars in curriculums based on disproven pedagogy.

Based on last year's numbers, over 300,000 students will move from Kindergarten to 3rd grade by the time this bill takes effect. With up to 20% of students having dyslexia, that's nearly 60,000 students who would be better served sooner rather than later. We should do better. We owe it to those students. We owe it to our communities

Yes, I support these bills; however, the language that was adopted as amended does not help the students these bills are intended to help. By delay, the only benefit is to the districts. I'm on our district's curriculum advisory committee and have seen districts implement entire core curricular changes the single year after piloting and adopting. This happens every year in districts all across Michigan. They've had years of warnings. Yet they have chosen not to change course. They simply do not need three more years to put this legislation in place when we could be helping tens of thousands of students, much sooner.

Let's move forward with SB567 & 568, but on a realistic timeline that better serves our students.

Respectfully,

C.J Snow
Ypsilanti, MI

Legan Rose

From: Michele Maleszyk <mmaleszyk@aol.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 2, 2024 10:04 AM
To: Rep. Joe Tate (District 10); Legan Rose; Rep. Jaime Churches (District 27); jaimegreen@house.mi.gov; Rep. Matt Koleszar (District 22); Rep. Nate Shannon (District 58); Rep. Regina Weiss (District 6); Rep. Carol Glanville (District 84); Rep. Jennifer A. Conlin (District 48); Rep. Kimberly Edwards (District 12); Rep. Dylan Wegela (District 26); Rep. Jaime Greene (District 65); Rep. Greg Markkanen (District 110); Rep. Brad Paquette (District 37); Rep. Pauline Wendzel (District 39); Rep. Gina Johnsen (District 78); gretchen.whitmer@michigan.gov; Rep. Tom Kuhn (District 57); tom.kuhn@house.mi.gov
Subject: House Education Committee Hearing SB 567 & SB 568 June 4th

Michele Maleszyk
2927 Winter Dr
Troy MI 48083
(586) 838-0042

Dear House Education Committee Members,

I am writing to ask your support of SB 567 and SB 568. I am the parent of a first grader in the Troy School District and a former elementary educator. I have written several emails to you before asking for your support and your "yes" vote. I have also shared our story before. I am asking that you read this letter during the Tuesday June 4th House Education Committee hearing, I will also likely be in the audience.

My daughter, Grace, is a first grader in the Troy School District. Grace is a victim of the unreliable universal screeners used in the Troy School District. Our district relies on the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, which has found to be unreliable at detecting struggling readers. Recent studies suggest the Fountas and Pinnell assessment is reliable as little as 50% of the time. This same assessment was used on my daughter in kindergarten and first grade. I was repeatedly told that my daughter was performing at "grade level." I had concerns and wasn't receiving answers. Thankfully, I recognized signs of dyslexia and realized my daughter was struggling.

I hired a private tutor at the cost of \$60 to \$85 per hour. The private tutor continues to use structured literacy methods that help students like my daughter. My daughter has had well over 100 hours of private tutoring at this point. We also work with her extensively at home.

Grace was found to have dyslexia after an independent evaluation was conducted by a licensed psychologist outside of the district. The psychologist recommended structured literacy methods based on Orton Gillingham instruction. My daughter had not received any structured literacy or Orton Gillingham instruction from the school to this day. Here we are nearly two years later any daughter is subjected to balanced literacy curriculum, and poor universal screeners. I have brought my concerns up to the school district, starting at the lowest level with the principal and taking the concerns all the way to the superintendent and school board. Parents in Troy even hosted a rally. Our concerns were not addressed.

See this link here for the rally

<https://www.cbsnews.com/detroit/news/troy-school-district-parents-calling-for-literacy-reform/>

Thankfully, had the knowledge and the financial means to get help and support for my child. Dyslexic children can be successful readers. A child's success should not depend on the parents' ability to pay for private tutoring and evaluations. The current system in my district and many other is inequitable. At this time, I am looking for an alternative school for my daughter that uses methods grounded in the Science of Reading. Unfortunately, our local district is unwilling to make any changes or provide the recommended supports for my daughter, Grace.

Grace's story is not unique. I have connected with many parents all over Michigan that have similar experiences. We cannot continue to fail our children. Michigan is currently in the bottom 10, when it comes to reading. These bills will help ensure that students are screened, teachers are trained, and we do not continue to fail our children.

Districts like the Troy School District, where many parents spend thousands on tutoring, will continue to rely on these ineffective and harmful practices until the bills are passed. Please support these bills. I know Grace will not benefit from these bills, but I don't want to see anymore children harmed by these ineffective practices. I urge you to vote "yes" today and move these bills forward.

Respectfully,

Michele Maleszyk

CC: Rep Tom Kuhn, Gov Gretchen Whitmer

Here is a link to the article that discussess the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment that is still being used as a universal screener by many districts, including my district in Troy.

[Benchmark Assessment System reading test is widely used and often wrong](#)



Benchmark Assessment System reading test is widely used and often wrong

Christopher Peak

"Flipping a coin would actually be better" for identifying struggling readers, one researcher said of the test c...

RE:

HOUSE BILL 5649

SENATE BILLS 567 & 568

House Education Committee written Testimony for the record June 4, 2024

My youngest son who is now 21, can read today only because we took him out of TCAPS (Traverse City Area Public Schools) to have him tutored by our amazing tutor, Miss Peggy, who addressed the systematic way a dyslexic learns to read. He was reading at a kindergarten level at the end of third grade after years of the school's ineffective reading interventions, even though for years I had been asking teachers, reading interventionists and administrators about him being dyslexic. I was told, he is a boy, he will catch up, let's wait and see, we don't believe in dyslexia, dyslexia doesn't exist. By the time 3rd grade hit, he was in a dire place academically, emotionally and my once happy boy was falling apart. The end of third grade, I had enough and we asked for him to be tested for an IEP and also had him screened for dyslexia outside of the school system to see what both came up with. Through the outside source, he was determined to have characteristics of dyslexia and would benefit from structured literacy intervention. Through school, he also qualified for the IEP under Specific Learning Disability.

(Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.)

SLD is the *largest* IEP category, it includes dyslexia. However, most of our educators, administrators and even our reading specialists would not say or use the word dyslexia. Our child **never** received one reading intervention for a student who is dyslexic at TCAPS, even with an IEP for SLD. We started paying for tutoring outside of the school in the summer after his identification as we were told he would not be receiving summer services with his IEP even though he was 3 full years behind. We saw a change over the summer with tutoring. We continued to have him tutored. 2X weekly his day started at 7:30am and he went to school at 8:30, I had to say he had an apt otherwise we were told we would be truant. It was also a financial burden on us too. Tutoring was like a car payment, here our child qualified to get interventions at school via taxpayer funding and we were the ones paying for his interventions outside of the school system! In the summer of his 7th grade, with a year of financial planning for it, we went to Grand Rapids for a formal diagnostic evaluation so we would have a formal diagnosis of dyslexia and that would be documented if he decided to go to college. It was determined he was severely dyslexic. It is on a spectrum from mild to profound. We also determined that my husband is an unidentified dyslexic, and his dad most likely too. It is hereditary. All three went to TCAPS, none of them, 3 generations worth, were identified as having characteristics of dyslexia by the education system. My husband was classic dyslexic and no one even knew until I figured out our son. This is the norm. It is parents that have to take matters into their own hands as to why their children are not able to read. They are determined to figure it out, and in figuring out their child, the shock and realization of this being a mirror of one or both parents' own academic struggles is obvious.

For our son in 8th grade, we moved from an IEP to a 504 plan. We did this for a few reasons. We wanted our son to be in the least restrictive environment. After 4 years of having IEP services, we were the ones that provided the reading instruction (paid for by us) and he could get the support he needed with a 504 for accommodations. We had a lot of help at school, but that included inappropriate instruction and very few who really understood a dyslexic learner. At West, he

attended the career tech center to learn the welding craft his junior and senior year. He graduated the year of COVID. Attended NMC in the welding certification program. He now works for Britten Inc. and does welding and manufacturing for Box Pop.

With Michigan being 42 in the country in reading at 4th grade level, something needs to be done! This has never been addressed and should have been with Amanda Price's 3rd grade reading bill. Until we address this void in our educational system, we will continue to have a reading crisis. During the Senate Education Committee testimony for SB 567 568 the Superintendents Association was not in support. To that, "Staying the course" is not acceptable any longer, and failing to address this borders on educational malpractice with what we know in science and years of information! Also, John Severson, stated he wants to help by building on our existing practices to identify and support students with dyslexia. **To that, there are minimal to non-existent practices in schools currently!** These bills will address that! These kids who struggle, need to be identified, given the appropriate instruction and have an educational system that understands their learning needs and how to identify and address the deep academic deficits they have. We should be doing everything we can to change the trajectory of being 42nd in the country. Our teachers need these tools and insight in their hands. They are not taught this in college!

In speaking with an ISD Superintendent, I know the teacher shortage is strong on his mind, and could be on yours as well. I will tell you like I told him, **kids don't have time to wait..... they don't!** The early years PS, K are critical. 3 years of wrong interventions and not learning to read can lead to a long struggle in life that really is avoidable.

This legislation is needed. I have been at this for a long time. This is the 4th or 5th time bills addressing struggling readers, especially those with dyslexia have been in the legislature. *If passed, they will make a huge positive impact on the reading crisis in Michigan especially for those who struggle to learn to read or those that have dyslexia, as well as training for teachers on how to identify red flags for dyslexia and utilize instruction based on scientific research. All children can learn to read if properly taught and supported.*

Our family urges you to fully support and pass these bills from the House Ed Committee and move them to the House floor for a vote before the end of this session.

Thank you,
Terra Walters

Legan Rose

From: Audra Melton <meltonaudra@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 3, 2024 3:23 PM
To: Legan Rose
Subject: Support for SB 567 & 568

Hello Committee Clerk Rose,

My name is Dr. Audra Melton and I am a recently retired teacher and administrator from the Troy School District in Troy, MI. I also live in Troy and have a TSD graduate and current senior in Troy Schools who also is dyslexic. My work in Troy schools and my personal experience as a parent of a dyslexic child gives me some unique perspectives and knowledge that I would like to share.

I support SB 567 & 568 for a variety of reasons, starting with the requirement of the use of an appropriate screener that would detect the presence of dyslexic characteristics. Troy School District currently does not use a screener that would pick up these traits. The screener they use is actually not recommended by the MDE for use at all. Additionally, Troy School District does not use whole classroom instruction or interventions that are evidence based (meaning backed by scholarly research) in the cognitive science of how children actually learn how to read. Let me share why this is so detrimental to kids through the story of my son.

My son was screened as all kids are in Troy, using the Benchmark Assessment System (more commonly known as Fountas and Pinnell (F & P)). This assessment is not designed to pick up on the characteristics of dyslexia and has been shown in research to be an inaccurate screener of reading difficulties in general. <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2023/12/11/benchmark-assessment-system-reading-test-often-wrong>

Troy School District uses the Lucy Calkins Reading and Writing Workshop model of instruction which is a balance literacy approach, not based in the science of how children learn to read. My son struggled with reading and in 1st grade was recommended for Reading Recovery, a balanced literacy intervention also not grounded in principals of the science of reading. This 20 week one on one tutoring intervention is a balanced literacy approach that has been shown be ineffective for children with dyslexia and the most recent scholarly research has shown that many children who have participated in Reading Recovery actually perform worse in reading in 3rd and 4th grade than struggling readers that did not participate in Reading Recovery. <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2022/04/23/reading-recovery-negative-impact-on-children>

My son was shown to have reached grade level performance as measured by Reading Recovery standards (their own internal standards, not a nationally normed assessment) by the end of the intervention. Reading Recovery justifies its high price by stating that children won't need further intervention services after participating in the program, however, this is most often not the case. We began private tutoring with a Reading Recovery trained tutor at this time hoping to ensure his success. In second grade my son fell back to below grade level performance and continued to perform below grade level through the end of third grade despite the additional tutoring.

At the beginning of 4th grade, I was putting my son to bed one night and he began sobbing uncontrollably, punching himself in the head, and saying repeatedly that he was stupid and wished that he had never been

born. All because he couldn't read. No child should have to feel this way. This is not just an academic issue, it's also a mental health issue. At that point, despite him never being brought to a child study team, an MTSS process, or being suspected by any teacher K-4th grade of having a disability, I requested in writing to my son's principal that I wanted to have him evaluated for a learning disability. He was evaluated and found to be in the 1st-3rd percentiles for all of the reading characteristics related to dyslexia. I asked myself, how does a child go through four years of school, is evaluated multiple times a year in reading, and is in the 1st-3rd percentiles for reading skills, yet is never thought by anyone at school as potentially having a reading problem? I can tell you why... it's that the district to this day, does not use an appropriate reading screener, one that would have picked up on these traits as early as kindergarten. One that could have identified my son as a child that needed further evaluation and spared him years of struggle and emotional distress.

These bills are desperately needed to require school districts like Troy to use screeners that will identify children like my son instead of letting them fall through the cracks year after year because of ineffective screeners and the use of classroom instruction and interventions that are not compatible with the cognitive science of how children learn to read. Additionally, colleges and universities that are training teachers need to be using the most up-to-date scientific research-based methods for reading instruction courses to ensure that our new teachers entering the field are prepared to confidently instruct children in reading.

Despite overwhelming support from the state senate, I am hearing that there is hesitancy on the part of some representatives to support these bills. There are many groups that would like to maintain the status quo for a variety of reasons, none of which involve doing what is best for kids. It is imperative that representatives set aside the self-interests of these groups and really look at how our kids are performing as whole and also as subgroups. The school board and central office administration in Troy point out what a high achieving school district we have by comparing our performance to those of the county and state. Considering the State of Michigan is in the bottom ten states nationally in reading, it is not a high bar which to use as comparison. Regardless, Troy believes that having 65.9% of all 3rd graders proficient on the MSTEP is a reason to maintain the status quo. That actually means that 34.1% are not proficient. I don't see how having a little over 1/3 of our 3rd graders not proficient readers isn't a call for change. It gets worse. While the Troy School District administration does not present this information publicly or even to its own board of education, this information below is publicly available on mischooldata.org. Here are the percentages of 3rd grade students that are NOT reading proficient in Troy's student subgroups.

Black Students- 60.5% Not Proficient

Economically Disadvantaged Students- 58.5% Not Proficient

English Learners- 47.0% Not Proficient

Students with Disabilities- 76.9% Not Proficient

These numbers tell a very different story. A story of marginalized children being left behind because of a school system that chooses to continue on the path of status quo. A district that chooses to use ineffective screeners, instructional methods and interventions that are not grounded in the cognitive science of how ALL children learn to read. Parents in Troy have long requested additional assessments and interventions that would help their children and have consistently been told that the district leadership are the "experts", that their programs are working, and that "the district has no desire to implement any additional interventions". Basically, parents of struggling students are sent away and are forced to look for outside

help. That outside help for my son came in the form of Orton-Gillingham reading tutoring (a structured literacy intervention based in the science of reading) which is considered the gold-standard for students with dyslexia. That help came at a cost of \$60,000.00 dollars to my family over the course of his education. What has been created in Troy, and I'm sure in many cities across Michigan, is a case of have and have nots. Because districts can choose to keep using ineffective screeners, instructional practices, and interventions, parents either pay for the help their kids need and if they don't have the money, their kids continue to go down a spiral of learning loss as content reading complexity increases and their ability to engage decreases.

I saw this spiral of academic decline as a middle school principal in Troy and it was heartbreaking. Kids that struggled to read, couldn't keep up with the content, and eventually gave up because my own district refused to use tools to identify and support them. While districts like Troy can point to their "averages" to hide the real story, some districts aren't able to do so. In both cases, the most frustrating part is that we know what scientific research has shown in terms of how kids learn to read, yet district leaders refuse to make changes that would help all kids. This is why we need these bills. Every year that goes by, more students are left to struggle and eventually become academic casualties of the resistance to do the right thing. We can literally alter the course of kids lives by passing these bills.

Please show your support for these bills and advocate for your colleagues to do the same. The passing of these bills will provide a life-changing legacy for thousands of children.

Respectfully,

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