

STATE SENATOR KATHY BERNIER
TWENTY-THIRD SENATE DISTRICT



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From: Senator Kathy Bernier
To: The Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 578
Relating to: assessments to evaluate reading readiness.
Date: January 22, 2020

Chairman Kooyenga and members of the committee, thank you for hearing Senate Bill 578 today. I am grateful to be working with Representative Kulp on this important bill to help all of our kids by proactively identifying students with dyslexia and other reading conditions before they derail the child's education.

In too many cases, reading impairments like dyslexia are not identified until a child has reached third or fourth grade. And in many cases, the challenges are only discovered after a child has fallen so far behind and is so demoralized that their love of learning is threatened or entirely extinguished.

Current law requires schools to annually assess the reading readiness of children from four-year-old kindergarten through second grade by evaluating phonemic awareness (recognizing and manipulating sounds in spoken language) and letter sound knowledge. However, assessments that only meet these minimum requirements do not give educators enough information to identify a reading disorder.

Senate Bill 578 specifies that the assessment must evaluate whether a student possesses age-appropriate skills in phonological and phonemic awareness, as well as rapid automatized naming, letter-word reading, and picture-naming vocabulary. By including these specific skill categories, we will give educators the information they need to identify a reading problem at an earlier age and make sure that every student has a chance to succeed.

I hope you will join me, Representative Kulp and parents, students and educators across Wisconsin in supporting this change by voting yes on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

BOB KULP

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families

FROM: State Representative Bob Kulp, 69th Assembly District

DATE: January 22, 2020

RE: Support for Senate Bill 578 / Assessments to Evaluate Reading Readiness
Support for Senate Bill 579 / Requiring Each CESA to Employ a Dyslexia Specialist

Thank you Chairman Kooyenga and fellow committee members for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 578 ("SB 578") and Senate Bill 579 ("SB 579"). I appreciate having the opportunity to express my support for both:

- SB 578 which relates to assessments to evaluate reading readiness; and
- SB 579 which requires each cooperative educational service agency ("CESA") to employ a dyslexia specialist.

More than 2 million American children receive special educational treatment because of dyslexia which is a common learning disorder that negatively affects a person's ability to read. Wisconsin's reading scores have fallen to 34th in the country. However, Wisconsin is one of only seven states that has not yet implemented some form of dyslexia educational programming.

Wisconsin cannot afford to leave dyslexic students behind. The dyslexia guidebook bill currently working its way through our state legislature is a good start, but more can be done to tackle this issue. As Chair of the 2018 Legislative Council Study Committee on the Identification and Management of Dyslexia, I received input from people across the state. As many of you know, I've introduced a package of dyslexia bills which are the product of those discussions and input. Introduction of the dyslexia bills coincided with the Governor's declaration of October as Dyslexia Awareness Month.

One of the bills included in the dyslexia package is SB 578 that relates to assessments to evaluate reading readiness. Currently, each school board and operator of an independent charter school must annually assess the reading readiness of children from kindergarten through the second grade. Currently, chapter 118.016 of the statutes addresses assessments in reading readiness. However, current statutes lack enough specific categories in which to identify an individual with a reading disability. SB 578 adds language to chapter 118.016 that includes not just phonemic awareness but rapid automatized naming, letter-word reading, and picture-naming vocabulary. By adding these methods of screening our schools will be able to catch a reading problem at an earlier age.

A second bill included in the dyslexia package is SB 579 that requires each CESA to employ a dyslexia specialist. The 2018 Legislative Council Study Committee on the Identification and Management of Dyslexia identified in their recommendations to the state legislature that a dyslexia specialist position

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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should be created. The individual would be tasked with assisting school districts in developing and maintaining dyslexia programs. SB 579 creates a dyslexia specialist at each CESA based upon this recommendation. The bill defines a dyslexia specialist as an individual who meets specific criteria, including that the individual has at least five years' experience in screening, identifying, and treating dyslexia and related conditions and that the individual has received advanced training in various topics related to dyslexia and related conditions. A dyslexia specialist at the CESAs will offer a valuable resource of dyslexia related information for parents and schools.

SB 578 and SB 579 aim to give parents and teachers more tools than are currently available in order to help kids learn to read. I think that is a goal that everyone can get behind.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman for scheduling the public hearing today on SB 578 and SB 579.

Senators,

Good day. Senate Bill 578 is an amendment to the current law under ACT 166 which requires literacy screening of 4k through 2nd grade using a literacy screener of a district's choice. The assessment must include only two skills; phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge [s.118.016,Stas].

Under the proposed bill, each school must assess pupils in four-year old kindergarten through 2nd grade for reading readiness and existing or potential reading difficulties. This can be accomplished through a voluntary questionnaire about reading difficulties in the pupil's family history. Difficulties with reading and/or dyslexia are inherited. There is about a 40% chance of siblings to have dyslexia or reading issues. Up to 49% of parents of kids with dyslexia may have it also. School districts that have this information early on would know that a potential for reading difficulties or even a learning disability in reading (dyslexia) may exist. Currently 36 states have some sort of screening for characteristics of a reading disability.

Additionally, the bill requires the use of an appropriate, standardized, norm-referenced, valid and reliable assessment of skills. The assessment will evaluate whether a pupil possesses age appropriate skills in all of the following areas:

- a. Phonological and phonemic awareness
- b. Rapid Automatized Naming
- c. Letter word reading
- d. Picture naming vocabulary

Research from 1986 that continues today confirms that highly reliable and valid predictions of future reading skills are found from these four assessments.

By adding the family history questionnaire and requiring a standardized and norm-referenced assessment with include a more in depth analysis of reading readiness skills beyond the current minimal skills, students at-risk of reading failure will be identified sooner. Early identification and interventions increases the success rate for students. In fact, one meta-analysis by neuroscientist Nadine Gabb showed that up to 70 percent of at-risk children who receive educational intervention in kindergarten or first grade become proficient readers.

Wisconsin's 4th grade scores on National Assessment Educational Progress NAEP of 2019 indicated that 34% of Wisconsin students are below basic in reading. That is NOT ok.

Donna Hejtmanek Legislative Chair
International Dyslexia Association Wisconsin Branch

Senate Bill 578 testimony from Brenda Warren, M.D., Ph.D

I am speaking in favor of SB 578.

I wear a few different hats related to dyslexia. I am a pediatrician, although not currently practicing and the mother of a 23 year-old with dyslexia who was not diagnosed until 5th grade. He still suffers from anxiety and low self-esteem from feeling like he was stupid for so many years.

I am a school board member (and have been for the past 16 years) and a recent PhD graduate. My doctoral dissertation examined the barriers preventing scientifically-based reading research from impacting classroom reading instruction. I also served on the Legislative Council for the identification and management of dyslexia.

There are far too many children with dyslexia in our schools that are suffering from a wait-to-fail approach rather than a proactive approach that includes early identification and early intervention. Waiting to fail means the diagnosis occurs sometime after first grade but the interventions for dyslexia are actually more effective in kindergarten and first grade. Waiting until after first grade to provide interventions not only increases the child's difficulty for learning to read; it also compounds the associated symptoms of shame, anxiety, depression, and learned helplessness which are all common symptoms in students with dyslexia.

Adding the new assessments to the reading readiness screener to what is already required for early screening of reading readiness will increase the identification of students with risk factors for dyslexia. For instance, Rapid Automatized Naming has been shown over many years of research to consistently indicate dyslexia risk, even in 3-4 year olds. These additional screeners will enable teachers to provide interventions earlier and more effectively assuming they have been provided the necessary training. [I will speak to the necessary training more specifically in my next testimony regarding SB 579.] Additionally, obtaining a family history of reading difficulties or dyslexia is also important because of the heritability of dyslexia which can be as high as 50%. Knowing a student has a family risk factor will insure teachers monitor those students more closely.

One concern of some in opposition to this this kind of screening is that these screening tests might diagnose students who don't actually have dyslexia which is called a false positive. However, even if there are false positives there will be no harm to children because the interventions they will receive are not only good for children with dyslexia, they are good interventions for all struggling readers.

It is time to provide equity in reading instruction across Wisconsin. All students deserve to learn to read. One way to provide this equity is to pass SB 578.

Thank you.

Brenda Warren

Brenda Warren
President

Board of Education
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Green Bay, WI 54301
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**Green Bay Area
Public School District**
Engagement. Equity. Excellence.

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS SCREENING TEST (PAST)

David A. Kilpatrick, Ph.D. © 2003, 2010, 2016
Adapted from the levels used in McInnis (1999) & Rosner (1973)

Name: _____ Date: _____ Grade _____ Age _____
Teacher: _____ D.O.B.: _____ Evaluator: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: See *Equipped for Reading Success* Chapter 11: "Assessment of Phonological Awareness" for instructions on the PAST.

RESULTS:

	Correct	Automatic	Highest Correct Level:	_____
Basic Syllable	____/12	____/12	(Levels not passed below the highest correct level)	_____
Onset-Rime	____/10	____/10		
Basic Phoneme	____/10	____/10		
Advanced Phoneme	____/20	____/20	Highest Automatic Level:	_____
Test Total	____/52	____/52	(Non-automatic levels below highest automatic level)	_____

Approximate Grade Level (Circle):

PreK/K	K	late K/early 1st	1st	late 1st/early 2nd	2nd	late 2nd to adult
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Note: The grade levels listed throughout the PAST are estimates based on various research studies and clinical experience. There are no formalized norms.

I. SYLLABLE LEVELS

Basic Syllable Levels (D, E2: Preschool to mid kindergarten; E3 - mid kindergarten to early first)

LEVEL D "Say *birthday*. Now say *birthday* but don't say *birth*."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *birthday* without saying *birth*, you get *day*. Okay? Let's try another one."

D1 (birth)day _____ (air)port _____ cow(boy) _____

D2 (num)ber _____ (en)ter _____ an(sw)er _____

LEVELS E2-3 "Say *November*. Now say *November* but don't say *No*."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *November* without saying *No*, you get *vember*. See how that works?"¹

E2 (No)vember _____ (vol)cano _____ (re)member _____

E3 (won)derful _____ (bar)becue _____ (li)brary _____

Basic Syllable Total:

Correct Automatic

____/3 A: ____/3

____/3 A: ____/3

____/3 A: ____/3

____/3 A: ____/3

____/12 A: ____/12

II. ONSET-RIME LEVELS

Onset-Rime Levels (Kindergarten to mid first grade)

LEVEL F "Say *fall*. Now say *fall* but don't say /f/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *fall* without the /f/, you get *all*; *fall-all*."

/f/all → all _____ /s/and → and _____

/sh/own → own _____ /w/ait → ate _____ /c/are → air _____

LEVEL G "Say *wood*. Now say *wood* but instead of /w/ say /g/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *wood*, and change the /w/ to /g/, you get *good*; *wood-good*."

/w/ood /g/ → good _____ /m/ake /l/ → lake _____

/r/ed /s/ → said _____ /l/awn /g/ → gone _____ /b/oat /n/ → note _____

Onset-Rime Total:

Correct Automatic

____/5 A: ____/5

____/5 A: ____/5

____/10 A: ____/10

¹Only use a phrase like "See how that works?" once during the test, the first time the student responds incorrectly or not at all.

III. PHONEME LEVELS

Basic Phoneme Levels (Late kindergarten to late first grade)

LEVEL H

H1 (Deletion) "Say *sled*. Now say *sled* but don't say /s/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *sled* without the /s/, you get *led*; *sled-led*."

/s/led /s/ → led ____ /c/limb /c/ → lime ____

H2 (Substitution) "Say *slide*. Now say *slide* but instead of /s/ say /g/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *slide*, and change the /s/ to /g/, you get *glide*; *slide-glide*."

/s/lide /g/ → glide ____ /b/rain /c/ → crane ____ /b/reeze /t/ → trees ____

LEVEL I "Say *beam*. Now say *beam* but don't say /m/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *beam* without the /m/, you get *bee*; *beam-bee*."

bea/m/ /m/ → bee ____ stor/m/ /m/ → store ____ pla/ne/ /n/ → play ____

si/z/e /z/ → sigh ____ cou/ch/ /ch/ → cow ____

Basic Phoneme Total:

Advanced Phoneme Levels (Late first to late second grade; Level M: Late second to late third grade)

LEVEL J (Substitution) "Say *sit*. Now say *sit* but instead of /i/ say /a/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *sit*, and change the /i/ to /a/, you get *sat*; *sit-sat*."

I. (short sound of vowel) s/i/t /a/ → sat ____ wh(e)n /u/ → won ____ r/o/ck /e/ → wreck ____

II. (long sound of vowel) r/ea/d /o/ → road ____ ph/o/ne /i/ → fine ____

LEVEL K

K1 (Deletion) "Say *glide*. Now say *glide* but don't say /l/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *glide* without the /l/, you get *guide*; *glide-guide*."

g/l/ide → guide ____ s/w/eet → seat ____

K2 (Substitution) "Say *flute*. Now say *flute* but instead of /l/ say /r/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *flute*, and change the /l/ to /r/, you get *fruit*; *flute-fruit*."

f/l/ute → f/r/uit ____ s/p/eed → s/k/ied ____ s/m/ile → s/t/yle ____

LEVEL L (Substitution) "Say *mouth*. Say *mouth* but instead of /th/ say /s/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *mouth*, and change the /th/ to /s/, you get *mouse*; *mouth-mouse*."

mou/th/ /s/ → mouse ____ see/d/ /t/ → seat ____ ge/t/ /s/ → guess ____

heal/th/ /p/ → help ____ mon/th/ /ch/ → munch ____

LEVEL M

M1 (Deletion) "Say *send*. Now say *send* but don't say /n/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *send* without the /n/, you get *said*; *send-said*."

se/n/d → said ____ de/n/t → debt ____

M2 (Substitution) "Say *drift*. Now say *drift* but instead of /f/ say /p/."

FEEDBACK: "If you say *drift*, and change the /f/ to /p/, you get *dripped*; *drift-dripped*."

dri/f/t → dri/pp/ed ____ wor(k)ed → wor(s)t ____ pa/s/te → pai/n/t ____

Advanced Phoneme Total:

Correct Automatic

____/5 A: ____/5

____/5 A: ____/5

____/10 A: ____/10

Correct Automatic

____/5 A: ____/5

____/5 A: ____/5

____/5 A: ____/5

____/5 A: ____/5

____/20 A: ____/20

Date: January 22, 2020
TO: Committee Senators
FROM: Mary G. Olsen
RE: Senate Bill 578

Dear Senators,

Good day. Senate Bill 578 is an amendment to the current law under ACT 166 which requires literacy screening of 4k through 2nd grade using a literacy screener of a district's choice. The assessment must include only two skills; phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge [s.118.016,Stas].

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Additionally, the bill requires the use of an appropriate, standardized, norm-referenced, valid and reliable assessment of skills. The assessment will evaluate whether a pupil possesses age appropriate skills in all of the following areas:

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Research from 1986 that continues today confirms that highly reliable and valid predictions of future reading skills are found from these four assessments.

By adding the family history questionnaire and requiring a standardized and norm-referenced assessment with include a more in-depth analysis of reading readiness skills beyond the current minimal skills, students at-risk of reading failure will be identified sooner. Early identification and interventions increase the success rate for students. In fact, one meta-analysis by neuroscientist Nadine Gabb showed that up to 70 percent of at-risk children who receive educational intervention in kindergarten or first grade become proficient readers.

Wisconsin's 4th grade scores on National Assessment Educational Progress NAEP of 2019 indicated that 34% of Wisconsin students are below basic in reading. That is NOT ok.

Respectfully yours,

Mary G. Olsen

Mary G. Olsen (Mother & Grandmother of Dyslexia, as well as I also am Dyslexic)

Good Morning Senators,

My name is Jessica Kloes and I am a small business owner in the rural town of Lake Tomahawk WI. I am here today to tell you how dyslexia has impacted my family. My husband and daughter both have dyslexia and my son will soon be tested. Dyslexia is a condition that should be taken very seriously by every doctor, therapist, educator, school administrator, and legislator. Wisconsin needs to do everything possible to assure that people are educated on dyslexia and that starts by passing these bills.

Dyslexia can affect every aspect of your life. It can limit life activities and life quality. I watch my husband and the impact that it has on him. He hates going in public places when it requires him to read or write. He is ashamed. He is limited to what job he will take because no one wants to hire someone at a decent wage if they cannot read or write. Business owners are reluctant to hire someone that will require assistive technology.

Dyslexia affects career choices, your ability to participate in society, and your self-esteem. Depression, anxiety, and even suicide are common for individuals with dyslexia. Do we really want a world full of adults that are illiterate with mental health issues because they didn't receive the help they needed at an early age?

Bill SB579 is important to me because my daughter was recently diagnosed with dyslexia and I went to my local school and asked for help. I was denied an IEP, was denied a 504 and my daughter was given two accommodations. I have received no help from the school and as a result I have an extremely depressed daughter. She told me one day that the world would be better if she just wasn't in it. She is only 9 years old she shouldn't have to feel this pain. This pain is because she can't read or write she and she feels like she doesn't fit in at school and fears for her future of having a career as a veterinarian. I am in the processes of meeting with CESA and the school to relook at the current situation that I am in. It would be very helpful to me and my daughter to have someone that specializes in the school district policy along with someone that specializes in dyslexia. I am a new mom to dyslexia and I need help understand what I can do to help my daughter and I need the school to fully understand what dyslexia is in order for them to help her as well. Staffing CESA with a Dyslexia Specialist would be a very powerful resource for parents, schools and Wisconsin. I vote to pass Bill SB579

Bill SB578 should be passed without further thinking. Early evaluations are a key to a child's success. Every child learns at a different time a different pace but early evaluations will show what a child is strong at and what they are weak at. We do milestone checks at the doctor office to show growth and development why not do educational milestones.? I knew my daughter had dyslexia in kindergarten, but she couldn't be tested until she was 8 years old. If I could have

known sooner, I could have started helping her instead of letting her wander lost in the educational world for 3 years with no help. The most powerful statement I heard was "A child first learns to read, and then reads to learn" Knowledge is powerful, let's help our children be powerful. I vote to pass Bill SB579.

On a side note I have given each Senator a letter for my daughter's school. I would appreciate if you would consider signing this excuse slip to show the school that my daughter attended a hearing at the State Capital. Today is an educational day that my daughter will remember for the rest of her life.

Thank you for listening to my testimony, and thank you for your time considering Bill SB579 and Bill SB578.

MHLT School District

1/22/2020

Victoria Kloes missed school on 1/22 for an educational day that she will remember for the rest of her life. Victoria attended a hearing at the State Capital in Madison, WI to give testimony with her mother Jessica Kloes for Bill SB579 and Bill SB578.

Bill SB579 if passed will require each cooperative education service agency to employ a dyslexia specialist and Bill SB578 if passed is an assessment to evaluate reading readiness in children.

Please excuse Victoria on 1/22 for an educational day.

Thank you,

Jessica Kloes

Type to enter text

My name is Rachel and I am the mother of 3 children. An 8 year old boy and twin 7 year old girls. My single child and my twins are 13 months apart. I am here today on behalf of my daughter Remiah and my story on the road to dyslexia begins when my twin daughters were about 4 years old. Because all 3 of my children were so close in age it was easy for me to compare how they were growing and developing language. I was, and still am, a very involved mother who loves to read to my children. We would sing nursery rhymes, I would search Pinterest to find fun learning activities, games to learn the alphabet, games and songs for counting, craft projects, felt story board stories, and so on. I loved doing these activities with my children.

I began to notice when we would do these learning games and activities that two of my children seemed to be successfully learning to count, learning their alphabet and remembering colors and shapes. However, my daughter Remiah seemed to be struggling. While she could take cut out numbers and physically put them in the correct order she could not verbally count to 10 in the right order. If I had a pile of magnetic letters in front of her and asked her to find me the "C" she could, but if I showed her the letter "C" and asked her what letter it was she could not come up with the letter verbally on her own. I also noticed when she would be telling me a story she would stop in the middle of it trying to find the right words she wanted to say. Remiah would then change the word she wanted to say to something similar or would perhaps act out the word she was looking for when she would struggle to come up with the word herself.

When I mentioned my concerns to her primary care physician about her struggles with word retrieval she told me "children learn at their own pace" and "don't compare Remiah to her twin sister and older brother". Her words were "she's perfect". And as her mother I agreed. She was perfect. She is funny, sweet, creative, thoughtful, and very bright. But in my gut I just felt something was not right and I was concerned. I asked that she be tested in speech and language before she started school. To put my mind at ease, the doctor put in the order and a few weeks later Remiah was tested by a speech pathologist. She passed her language part of the test by state standards, but they were all only by a point or two. The speech pathologist agreed with me that she noticed Remiah's struggles with word retrieval. Since she technically passed her tests, she recommended Remiah receive speech services. By receiving the speech services, they were able to add in language services despite her passing the language test by state standards. This allowed Remiah to enter 4K with an IEP in speech and language services. 4K was the start of Remiah's school career. She entered school in the same classroom as her twin sister. Her twin sister was a quick learner excelling above expectations in every area of her report cards. However, when I would discuss with the teacher how Remiah was doing I would be told what a hard worker she was, how great she was at perseverance, how well she got along with everyone, and what a great attitude she had. It would be followed up with, she is still struggling to count, know her alphabet, her colors and shapes. She could take felt letters and use them to spell out her name correctly but she could not verbally tell you what those letters were. Same was true with counting, shapes, colors, and so on. This continued the entire school year, despite extra help at school and help at home. Kindergarten was much the same. By mid-kindergarten she was finally beginning to be able to verbally tell us her letters and numbers but at this point the other children are beginning to read. They were memorizing site words. While her teacher was concerned, she told me at this age children all develop at their own pace and that she would get it eventually. I was watching my smart, sweet,

hardworking daughter fall further and further behind. I decided to take her to the neuropsychology at Children's Hospital in WI to be evaluated for a learning disability. I needed someone to tell me how to help my daughter before she fell so far behind it would be too difficult to get caught back up.

Children's Hospital did 4 days of testing with her. They found her to be of average to high average IQ. They diagnosed her with an expressive language disorder but did not diagnose her with any specific learning disorder. As I was physically leaving their office on that last day, the man who had been going over the results with me casually mentioned to me that if she's still struggling at the end of second grade come back and get tested for dyslexia. I immediately dismissed this suggestion because from what I knew about dyslexia, at that time, it's when you see letters move on the page or see letters backwards. That just was not my kid. I left in tears feeling frustrated and with no answers.

Fast forward to first grade. My daughter is now far enough behind in reading that she is receiving services with a reading intervention teacher. Despite the extra help she is making very little progress. I got called in for a special conference with her general education teacher, her speech pathologist, and her reading intervention teacher about their concerns. They once again tell me what a bright hard worker Remiah is, and how she has such a great attitude, and never gives up but is falling very far behind in school despite the efforts they can see Remiah is making. Her general education teacher suggests I have Remiah tested by the school for a learning disability. I put my request in and they begin testing Remiah. We then set up a meeting to go over the results and once again Remiah scores just high enough that she does not qualify for a learning disability. During this meeting the LD teacher who was there to tell me she does not qualify for her services suggested the possibility of dyslexia. She mentioned some of Remiah's struggles with word retrieval and phonological awareness makes her think of dyslexia. I left that meeting that afternoon and spent the night devouring any information I could find on dyslexia. As I was reading article after article I felt someone was writing specifically about my little girl.

We now enter the current year of second grade. The schools do not test for dyslexia so I had to go on the waiting list at Children's Hospital in Milwaukee to have my child tested. The wait time to get an appointment to be tested is over a year long. Her first STAR testing for the year at school gave her a score of 1% on her reading test. Meaning 99% of the students in her grade at her school scored higher than she did. And yet, the school says she does not qualify for a learning disability. Intervention seems to be failing her. And we have over a year wait at Children's for any kind of possible diagnosis. During my learning of dyslexia I kept reading about the most successful way of teaching a child with dyslexia is by using the Orton Gillingham reading programs. My school did not offer these programs, so I began with a private tutor twice a week using the Barton reading program which is a branch off of the Orton Gillingham method.

I also received a tip from another mom that a psychologist in Appleton could get me in sooner than Children's for a fraction of the cost to evaluate for a diagnosis. I decided to try it and in January 2020, midway through second grade we finally received our diagnosis for dyslexia. Even with this diagnosis she does not receive any services at school. Her teachers have no training in dyslexia and I am responsible for any help my daughter needs when it comes her learning disability. As far as the school is concerned she officially has no learning disability since they do not look at outside medical diagnosis's.

I'm still very new on my journey of having a diagnosed child with dyslexia. But I have known for 3 ½ years that my daughter needed help. That she was incredibly bright, but learned very differently than my other two children. I repeatedly sought out help from doctors, speech pathologists, general education teachers, reading intervention teachers, and complete strangers. It took 3 ½ years of persistence on

my part before finally getting a diagnosis. 3 ½ years of precious time wasted for my child. 3 ½ years of my child struggling and not getting the help she needed. She still struggles and if it was not for the money I put towards tutoring and the time I spend driving her to a different town to get services twice a week she would still not be getting any of the resources she needs. It is my job to educate her teachers on what dyslexia is and how to best help my dyslexic child to read.

A child can be diagnosed with dyslexia at 5.5 years old with 92% accuracy.

Research shows that when measures like specialized tutoring are taken in grade 1 80% percent of kids who have difficulty reading can be remediated, meaning their accuracy when reading can be improved greatly. If steps are differed until grade 2, the success rate is 50%. And if remediation is deferred until grade 3, the success rate falls to about 20%. Early diagnosis and intervention is essential to success.

<https://www.todayparent.com/kids/school-age/dyslexia-in-children-screening/>

I often find myself wondering where my daughter would be academically right now if the proper measures had been taken when I first began to express concern about her word retrieval. If I would have found a teacher, or a speech pathologist, or a doctor who was educated on dyslexia and would have recognized the signs right away. If she would have been able to get the proper intervention at school when I first expressed concern instead of just waiting to see if she “gets it eventually” where would her reading levels be right now? I still worry about how the school is going to help her academically when there is no dyslexic reading program in her school. No teacher trained on what dyslexia is or how to help a child with dyslexia. I worry if I’m going to be able to continue the financial burden of paying for private tutors for her since she is not receiving the proper help at school. Statistically 20% of the population suffers from some form of dyslexia. That’s 1 in every 5 children in the classroom. It is the most common of language based learning disabilities that cause reading, writing, and spelling difficulties. Most go undiagnosed and without proper help because our teachers are not educated on what it is, how to recognize it or how to teach someone with it. I’m asking on behalf of my child and on behalf 1 in every 5 children in the classroom to pass legislation SB579 relating to requiring each cooperative education service agency to employ a dyslexia specialist and to pass legislation SB578 relating to assessments to evaluate reading readiness. Let’s strive to get all our children at grade level literacy skills in the state of WI.

Thank you so much for allowing me the time to tell you my daughter’s story today.



Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families
January 22, 2020

Statement in Opposition to Senate Bill 578

Background:

A number of changes have been made to reading readiness assessment requirements in state statutes in the last decade.

In 2011, Wisconsin Act 166, a product of Governor Walker's Read to Lead Taskforce, required each school board and governing body of each independent charter school to administer an appropriate, valid, and reliable assessment of literacy fundamentals selected by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to assess the reading readiness of kindergartners beginning in the 2012-13 school year. The assessment had to assess whether a pupil possessed phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge. Results of the assessment were required to be shared with parents.

Using this assessment, if a student was found to be at risk of reading difficulty they were required to be provided with interventions or remedial reading services. Wisconsin Statutes 121.02 (1)(c) requires that the interventions or services provided shall be scientifically based and shall address all areas in which the pupil is deficient in a manner consistent with the state standards in reading and language arts.

The DPI was appropriated \$800,000 for the 2013-14 school year to provide the assessment. The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) was chosen as the statewide assessment. PALS was chosen as a research-based screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tool. Wisconsin teachers used PALS to identify students at risk of developing reading difficulties, diagnose students' knowledge of literacy fundamentals, monitor progress, and plan instruction that targeted students' needs. Student data collected from PALS provided a direct means of matching literacy instruction to specific literacy needs.

The 2013 biennial budget provided additional funding for the assessment and expanded the reading readiness assessment chosen by the DPI to grades 4K - 1 in the 2013-14 school year and 4K - 2 in the 2014-15 school year. The three main PALS assessments used are described below.

- PALS-PreK - Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Preschool measured:
 - name writing,
 - alphabet knowledge,
 - beginning sound awareness,
 - print and word awareness, and
 - rhyme awareness,

- PALS-K (for 5K students) - Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten measured:
 - phonological awareness,
 - alphabet knowledge,
 - knowledge of letter sounds,
 - spelling,
 - concept of word, and
 - word recognition in isolation.
- PALS 1-3 (for grades 1 and 2) - Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for first through third grades measured:
 - spelling,
 - word knowledge,
 - letter sounds,
 - oral reading in context,
 - alphabet knowledge, and
 - phonemic awareness.

The 2015 biennial budget moved the state away from a single statewide screener. It changed the reading readiness assessment requirement so school districts and independent charter schools could choose their own reading screener to annually assess the reading readiness of students in grades 4K - 2. Whichever assessment is chosen, students must still be evaluated for phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge. The budget further required the department to reimburse school districts for the assessment chosen and prorate payments if costs exceeded the funds available.

Last year school districts and independent charter schools received reimbursement for \$1,713,410. The most frequently used assessments used were PALS, MAP, STAR, Aimsweb, and Fastbridge. PALS, MAP, and STAR are the most common assessments.

Analysis of SB 578

The bill, beginning in the 2020-21 school year, would make additional changes to the reading readiness assessment chosen by school districts and independent charter schools for students in grades 4K-2. It would add a requirement for a voluntary questionnaire about reading difficulties in a student's family history and further specify criteria that the assessment chosen must meet. Those criteria include age-appropriate skills in phonological and phonemic awareness, rapid automatized naming, letter-word reading, and picture-naming vocabulary.

The effect of the new criteria would be to eliminate all options for school districts and independent charter schools in the selection of a reading readiness assessment. The department has only been able to find one assessment that is commercially available that meets the requirements of the bill, the Predictive Assessment of Reading (PAR).

The PAR is currently used by only one school district in the state. Therefore, every other school district and independent charter school in the state would have to change their assessment of reading readiness and train their teachers in the use of a new assessment.

Recommendation

The DPI recommends maintaining current law requirements.

Schools are required to test for phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge and are required to provide interventions and supports based on the outcomes of those tests. Tests that meet this requirement are chosen by school districts and independent charter schools to meet the needs of their students. Teachers are currently trained in how to use the assessment chosen by their school district or independent charter school and how that assessment should be used to inform instruction.

DPI supports schools in whichever assessment they select, including PAR, as a local control choice.

To: Senator Dale Kooyenga, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children & Families

From: Kathy Champeau, WSRA Legislative Committee Chair
Deborah Cromer, WSRA President

Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2020

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 578: Modifying Reading Readiness Assessments

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for the opportunity to address 2019 Senate Bill 578 about literacy screening and assessment. As representatives of the Wisconsin State Reading Association (WSRA) we share the common goal of improving literacy learning for Wisconsin students. With this goal in mind, WSRA opposes SB-578 that in essence mandates a particular screener for reading difficulties and/or severely limits the choices for Wisconsin students in 4K-second grade without any appreciable gain. Our concerns with the legislation as proposed:

- During the past eight years the legislature has modified the early literacy screening assessment twice, and this legislation proposes to modify it for a third time.
- Does not take into account the expertise of local school districts, the decisions they have already made, and the time and resources they have expended to develop knowledge around the screeners they have already chosen and utilized over the past several years.
- Disrupts the longitudinal data schools have been collecting to establish trends and inform decision-making.
- Replaces local expertise of school districts and establishes a new state mandate in both policy and procurement criteria.
- The new procurement criteria further restrict the choice of screeners. Identifying how many vendors exist today that could meet these new criteria might be beneficial for the Committee to understand. The concern is that one vendor or only a very few meet the new criteria. Further, under current legislation, there is nothing preventing local school districts from selecting the type of screener this state legislation would mandate.
- A review of the literature finds a scarcity of evidence supporting the remediation of naming speed. Studies that have trained children with slow naming speed found short term gains that were not sustained over time (Kirby, et al. 2010). Thus, there remains significant doubt as to whether it is possible to increase naming speed; even if it were possible, it is unknown whether such gain would result in long term improved reading performance. (Norman & Wolf, 2012.)
- This new type of instrument yields little if any additional instructional value for teachers – meaning teachers will be unable to use the results of the new criteria to plan instruction. Instructional value must be a primary goal of assessment. (Elliott & Gregorenko, 2014; Scanlon & Vellutino 1996, 1997; Georgiou, Parrila, Manolitsis, and Kirby, 2011.)
- Peer reviewed studies support that phonemic awareness and letter knowledge continue to be the most reliable predictors for reading success. The constructs proposed in this legislation are arguably less potent measures and in the specific case of naming speed, instructionally meaningless, especially for preschool and kindergarten aged children. Given the consistent

reliability of phonemic awareness and letter knowledge, it is unnecessary to add additional measures that are costly, time consuming, and possess little educative value.

- Studies show a focus on building vocabulary alone is insufficient for improving later outcomes not only in literacy but in oral language. A vocabulary screener could erroneously be assessing language difference and not language disorder.
- The USDOE in their 2015 Testing Action Plan reported that we should not be relying too much on test results to judge students, teachers or schools, stating: “Assessments provide critical information about student learning, but no single assessment should ever be the sole factor in making an educational decision about a student, an educator, or a school.” In this report the USDOE states that critical information from actual student performance in the classroom is needed. An overemphasis on screeners as the most important tool for identifying children that struggle is not supported by research.
- Teachers can identify those students who are experiencing reading difficulties. What is needed are adequate resources for school districts to continue to improve professional literacy learning, particularly in light of lifetime licenses, revision of FoRT requirements for SPED teachers, and the expansion of licenses to K-9.
- Districts need adequate resources to hire more reading teachers instead of what some districts struggle with, a forced choice of reducing class size at the expense of reading teachers/specialists.
- Privacy regarding voluntary collection of sensitive family data is a concern as there are unique family histories and situations. The reliability of the data collected is at question as is how this data will help instruct the individual child.

Questions to consider:

1. What outcomes does this legislation seek to achieve, and is there evidence to support achieving those goals?
2. Which vendor(s) existing in the marketplace today can meet the newly proposed criteria?
3. There are other predictors of reading achievement including concepts about print, writing one’s name, and oral language. How and why were the criteria in this proposed legislation selected?
4. Bilingual learners are overrepresented in special education: How will that be addressed? How will schools assess bilingual learners with these measures and what will results indicate for potential reading disabilities for bilingual learners?
5. Cultural bias in testing is a real concern for assessing minority groups. Is there potential for cultural bias in a picture-naming test? Which populations might be put further at risk?
6. How does this new legislation consider the concerns raised by the U.S. Department of Education that there is too much needless testing, too much redundancy in testing, too much emphasis placed on a single test, and too much instructional time lost to testing?
7. If assessment is to be valuable to meet the individual needs of students, then classroom teachers need to be the instrument of such assessment to inform their daily expert decision-making for children. How would this new screening criteria accomplish that?
8. What would be the privacy considerations that need to be in place for collection of any family histories of learning difficulties, voluntary or otherwise, and how would this information be

used? What kind of information would be collected, anecdotal or formal documentation? Does it change the instructional implications for a child with reading difficulties?

9. Does the new licensure change which expands teacher certification to span grades kindergarten through ninth grade teachers benefit first graders where literacy learning is so critical? Does this new licensure expansion help teachers know more about literacy instruction in the primary grades?
10. At which grade levels do students have access to highly qualified, licensed reading teachers in school districts? School districts are often faced with the hard decision of, do they raise class size and hire reading teachers or do they keep class size manageable and hire a classroom teacher instead? WSRA members have heard of many stories where this forced choice is the norm.
11. At which schools do classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and volunteers act as reading interventionists because districts do not have the resources available to hire reading teachers?
12. Which districts allocate enough resources, time and money, to have continued professional literacy learning opportunities for their teachers across the grade levels to expand expertise for the diverse needs of their students? What happens when districts don't provide for continued learning in literacy?
13. In a state where teacher shortages have been cited for the need to change licensure requirements, once we have identified students at risk of reading difficulties, do we have enough highly qualified reading teachers and reading specialists to service our Wisconsin students across the grade levels, but particularly in primary grades? It is not unusual for schools who do not qualify for Title 1 funding to have limited or no reading teachers or reading specialists working with children with reading difficulties. Even Title I schools may not have reading teachers.

References:

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- Vellutino, F.R., Scanlon, D.M., Sipay, E.R., Small, S.G., Pratt, A., Chen, R., & Denckla, M.B. (1996). Cognitive profiles of difficult-to-remediate and readily remediated poor readers: Early intervention as a vehicle for distinguishing between cognitive and experiential deficits as basic causes of specific reading disability. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88, 601-638.

January 22, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

Where is the comparison between PALS and PAR? How are you helping teachers see the need to make this change? How will this increase student reading success? Are we potentially subjecting our students to more stress by requiring our students to perform in a timed test that may not produce improved results and may discriminate against minorities and the poor? Not only does potential legislation impact our students, but it will impact our district's resources.

What is the intent of our Wisconsin legislators in introducing a new screener especially when there is the appearance of an association that bleeds of corruption? Wisconsin prides itself on being a leader in education and this action doesn't reflect this. Where are the schools who piloted it? What educators promoted this test? Or is this coming from a group of non-educational groups making educational decisions without input from the educators? Would the medical profession accept national change from groups who have no knowledge of the field? Why would we allow this for our youth?

I have reviewed the web page of PAR, Predictive Assessment of Reading, and do not see how the PAR far exceeds PALS or any other screener currently in use. When I compare the PALS components to the PAR components, I do not see any benefit to changing what is working for the sake of change. The data teachers collect with the PALS is broad and comprehensive and from the site on PAR, the PAR is not near as comprehensive.

Tell me, how can overhauling one test for another FIX the problem? Won't this cause more issues?

Sincerely,

Denise Huffar
Cazenovia

Shawna Kitsembel
Richland Center

Kathleen Schoen
Plain

To: Senator Dale Kooyenga, Chair; Members, Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children & Families

From: Ryanne E. Deschane, First Grade Teacher/Reading Specialist

Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2020

Re: Concerns with SB758

Good morning, My name is Ryanne Deschane. I am an elementary teacher of 23 years. I have a BS in elementary education, with a minor in early childhood. In addition, I have a masters in literacy. I would like to thank this committee for the opportunity to have my testimony read today. In August I was able to attend in person and present my own testimony. Under the circumstances, with the hearing taking place in the middle of a school week, I was unable to make the trip to Madison.

Currently my district has a very thorough and comprehensive literacy screener. With this screener we are able to track longitudinal data as well as have immediate access to data that guides instructional moves. I understand that SB578 would replace our current screener. If that were to happen, the current longitudinal data we have collected on our students would no longer be able to be utilized. What are the side effects of this? One side effect would most certainly be that of time. Starting from scratch with a new screener would mean that longitudinal data would not be available for upwards of 3-6 months, perhaps longer.... That may not seem like a great deal of time to you, but when working with our most striving students, waiting for longitudinal data has the potential to be detrimental to any forward learning progressions. We would also not be able to compare the data we have been collecting for the last few years.

Further concerns that I have with SB578 are the components of rapid automatic naming and picture-naming vocabulary. These components concern me because I worry about the side effects they may cause for our English Language Learners as well as the minority groups we serve. I fear these components would create more systemic bias in an education system already wrought with equity issues.

While I understand and value the use of a literacy assessment/screener, I question the timing of this bill. Why now? What voices were heard in changing the criteria for the screener and what that means to our students and teachers. Which screener does the legislature have in mind? There is one that specifically fits this criteria, PAR. Is this the assessment that legislators are mandating? Who exactly made the decision that this particular screener/assessment was the best for ALL students in Wisconsin? Yes, literacy screeners are valuable instruments for tracking longitudinal data and guiding instructional moves. Most districts already utilize PALS or something similar. I just ask that before making a decision to put any bill into law, that you please consider the side effects, especially from an equity lens.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Ryanne E. Deschane

Here is my testimony regarding SB 578:

I stand against a mandated screener assessment. As a first grade teacher, I struggle to see how a 15 minute assessment from PAR will tell me if my students will "possess age-appropriate skills in all of the areas stated". The literacy screener that the first grade team has put together in my school district is in depth and has all of the data we want and need as teachers to teach our students the next steps in reading. Mandating and uprooting systems already put in place since the last mandated screener (PALS) would be detrimental to the longitudinal data my district has been collecting for years. The time and financial resources that would be required to train teachers, purchase PAR kits, assess students and grow and dig for new data would be some of the significant negatives to this mandated screener.

Brittany Bruun
403 N. Union St.
Mauston, WI 53948

January 22, 2020

FROM: Mary G. Olsen
2840 Fairway Drive
Altoona, WI 54720

TO: Senator Dale Kooyenga, Chair of the Children and Family Service Committee.

RE: Bill SB 578 Related to Assessments used to evaluate Reading Readiness & Bill AB110

Dear Senator Dale Kooyenga,

I am writing to register my support of **"Bill AB 110 for Creation of a Guidebook on Dyslexia."** I am a 67 year old survivor of dyslexia that has now extended into the 4th generation of my family members. At an early age, while watching my brother and sister struggle with reading difficulties, I vowed I would not be sent to the "pink apartments," as they were during the school day because they were labeled **"dumb"** and that is where you went if you couldn't read. Both my sister and brother were dyslexic and suffered from insecurity/poor self-image, while attending our small town school. I was mildly dyslexic; I could read o.k., but struggled with numbers. I was an over-achiever because of my poor self-esteem and insecurity (which followed me through most of my adolescence and adult years), but I was determined that I was not going to go to the "dumb pink apartments" to be taught reading, etc. I later graduated Cum Laude from UW Stout, but that did not alleviate my insecurity and anxieties from the past, or give me the confidence of knowing or feeling I was smart enough.

I later married a man that was severely dyslexic who could not read, and when our first son was born he was later also diagnosed with dyslexia (as determined by genetics, no surprise there), as well as ADHD. Reading was very difficult for my son, and he struggled emotionally throughout his early years; there was much inner anger and anxiety associated with his inability to read. He was placed in special education, which only increased the stigma that he carried. He had tutors, went to summer school, but because of the lack of knowledge and misinformation about dyslexia his reading improved very little. He made some wrong choices in his early years, due to what I feel was his inner emotional frustration of being dyslexic. He is now 41 years old, owns his own remodeling business, has a wonderful wife, and an amazing son (my beloved grandson) who just turned 11 years old.

For the past 3 years I have watched my grandson repeat history of that of his aunt, uncle, grandmother, grandfather, and father, which has broken my heart; he became frustrated and angry while attempting to read, he called himself "dumb," and "stupid," as he fell further behind his classmates academically. For a time he received additional tutoring at a local reading clinic that charged \$100 an hour, unfortunately little was gained at this clinic, leaving him more frustrated with feelings of poor self-worth. We searched for an alternate way of learning and were directed to the Children's Dyslexic Center of Upper Wisconsin in Eau Claire, WI. He was accepted at the Dyslexic Center 1 year ago, after being on the waiting list for over a year, and has since been tutored using the Orton-Gillingham approach to reading. He has made much progress and no longer calls himself "stupid or dumb." His reading is at grade level, where he was once 2-3 years behind. I am grateful that hopefully he will not have to carry the stigma of shame, such as others in our family have done for decades.

Now I ask, what can be done to help the 1 in 5 children that are dyslexic that are not receiving help in our educational institutions or even being recognized as being dyslexic? Why do students with dyslexia have to continue to struggle learning to read and struggle in keeping up with their peers? Only 11% of students with disabilities read at a proficient or advanced level on the 2017 NAEP, while 76% were below basic; this is not acceptable. Why aren't our teachers trained to identify and treat dyslexia, this makes absolutely no sense to me that they are not? It makes perfect sense, and is crucial that Wisconsin move forward with dyslexia legislation, why has it not been done before this? A guidebook on dyslexia should be created whereby teachers could be trained to identify and treat dyslexia, whereas now there is both a lack of knowledge and a lot of misinformation about dyslexia among both educators and families. A guidebook will separate the facts from the myths. And **MOST IMPORTANTLY** through the use of this guidebook, school districts may be able to reduce the emotional and academic struggles and failures of those students identified with dyslexia. At least 18 other states have published dyslexia guidebooks as an efficient way to share information. As well, nothing in the guidebook is binding on any educator school, or district in Wisconsin.

Please read the following text regarding the self-image of our children with dyslexia:

According to researcher Erik Erikson: *"The dyslexic's self-image appears to be extremely vulnerable to frustration and anxiety. During the first years of school, every child must resolve the conflicts between a positive self-image and feelings of inferiority. If children succeed in school, they will develop positive feelings about themselves and believe that they can succeed in life.*

If children meet failure and frustration, they learn that they are inferior to others, and that their effort makes very little difference. Instead of feeling powerful and productive, they learn that their environment controls them. They feel powerless and incompetent.

Researchers have learned that when typical learners succeed, they credit their own efforts for their success. When they fail, they tell themselves to try harder. However, when the dyslexic succeeds, he is likely to attribute his success to luck. When he fails, he simply sees himself as stupid.

Research also suggests that these feelings of inferiority develop by the age of ten. After this age, it becomes extremely difficult to help the child develop a positive self-image. This is a powerful argument for early intervention."

Thank you for taking the time to read my personal and emotional story. I am hopeful that you and the members of the Education Committee of the State Assembly will recognize the needs of our beautiful spirited students with dyslexia, and do what is necessary so that they don't fail, but succeed with confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.

Thank you for your time! Please feel free to call me at 715-514-7428, with questions or if needing further information.

Respectfully yours,

Mary G. Olsen

Mary G. Olsen

Kim Kaukl
Executive Director
1755 Oakwood Circle
Plain, WI 53577
Cell Phone: (608) 553-0689
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President, Chuck Keller
President-Elect, Cheryl Gullicksrud
Secretary, Diana Bohman,
Treasurer, Robert Smudde
Past President, Ben Niehaus

January 21, 2020

Chairman Kooyenga and members of the Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families:

My name is Kim Kaukl, I am the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA). I am writing on behalf of Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA) members in opposition to SB 578. Our organization represents and supports over 220 members with 155 rural school districts, several CESAs, technical colleges, universities, businesses and individual members.

Our organization has registered in opposition of the SB 578, We feel this bill could be very detrimental to our schools, as the vast majority use PALS. It is our understanding that the way the language is drafted that districts would have to move away from PALS and move to PAR to meet the bills language. This move would have a major impact on longitudinal data that districts presently collect as well as additional cost and time involved with purchasing a new program and the training that will go along with this shift. It is our understanding that more than 95% of the districts in the state use PALS for their assessment, while less than 5% use PAR. We recommend amending the bill to allow districts to use either PALS or PAR for their assessment.

In conclusion, SB 578 may end up being an unfunded mandate for districts, but more importantly have a negative impact on longitudinal data that districts presently collect. We ask that you oppose SB 578 or amend the bill to allow for continued use of PALS and the addition of PAR.

Thank you for your time and taking my written testimony into consideration,

Kim Kaukl

Kim Kaukl
Executive Director
Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance
608-553-0689
kimkaukl@wirsa.org

Schmidt, Melissa

From: Bentz, Nick
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 2:59 PM
To: Hoey, Joseph; Janis, Nick; Keith, Rachel; Lambert, RJ; Lonergan, Sandy; Mikalsen, Mike; Sargent, Justin; Schmidt, Dan; Schmidt, Melissa; Schmudlach, Shelby; Sen.Bewley; Sen.Darling; Sen.Kooyenga; Sen.Larson; Sen.Nass; Sen.Olsen; Sen.Schachtner; Smith, Sarah; Tomten, Amanda; Youngman, Lori; Zantow, Jenna
Subject: FW: AB110, SB578, SB579

Members and staff,

The comments below pertain to two bills we will hear in committee tomorrow.

Contact information is included should you have further questions.

Nick Bentz
State Sen. Dale Kooyenga
5th Senate District
310 South, State Capitol
608-266-2512
Nick.Bentz@legis.wi.gov

Follow Sen. Kooyenga on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
Visit Sen. Kooyenga's [website](#).

NOTE: Emails sent to and from this account may be subject to open records requests and should not be considered private.

From: Sen.Kooyenga <Sen.Kooyenga@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 11:17 AM
To: Bentz, Nick <Nick.Bentz@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: FW: AB110, SB578, SB579

From: Betsy Ryan <redbetsy@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 10:54 AM
To: Sen.Nass <Sen.Nass@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Kooyenga <Sen.Kooyenga@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Risser <Sen.Risser@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: AB110, SB578, SB579

Dear Senators,

I urge you to support the bills listed above which relate to the identification of and intervention for dyslexia. As the parent who searched unsuccessfully for years to find appropriate intervention for our middle daughter I know firsthand the frustration, anxiety and great difficulty in trying to identify her learning issue and to arrange treatment for my child who struggled in school from the beginning. Though as bright as her high achieving older and younger siblings, and enrolled in a great school with caring and creative teachers, our daughter could not keep up with her classmates in reading and language related tasks. My husband and I, though well educated in Social Work and Nursing respectively did not know anything about dyslexia, and even with master teachers

and a physician to consult within our family, not to mention easy access to our pediatrician, could not get any answer but to "wait", which is totally and tragically the wrong advice. What parent who truly cares will wait as children fall further and further behind before being able to arrange for help at school, where they spend most of their waking hours feeling totally inadequate; consequently, their self esteem takes a daily beating, and they can become anxious, unhappy and depressed

Parents need access to information about dyslexia and other reading disorders so they can secure appropriate assistance for their child as early as possible. Hopefully, armed with factual information, appropriate screening and timely intervention from dyslexia specialists, parents will not have to witness the untold suffering of hearing, as we did, their fifth grade child tell them that "if this is living, I don't want to do it anymore." You can imagine our distress at realizing the depths of our daughter's despair and suffering. Fortunately, we were able to get her tested and to connect with a program to address her specific learning issues, but it had taken years to know what could and should be done, and not for lack of trying on our part. Well-meaning, well-educated, very caring professionals had just not known the right advice to give us, and our child had suffered untold agonies of realizing she just did not measure up to her sisters or her peers.

(Like many other parents, my experience with our daughter's challenges led me to see what I could do to help. While serving as a reading tutor for 15 years at a local middle school, I encountered students with recalcitrant reading issues. I longed to be better prepared to work more effectively with them, and I completed the training and practicum to become a Certified Orton-Gillingham tutor, and was thrilled and encouraged to see my students make substantial progress in reading and related tasks as well as becoming dedicated, enthusiastic learners while gaining in self-confidence and independence.)

Unfortunately, this scenario is not uncommon; with up to 10% (and some would argue this number is greater) of the population affected by dyslexia, I as a Certified Orton-Gillingham tutor, with advanced training, and as a Certified Academic Language Practitioner, have tutored many children and adults whose academic experience has been fraught with failure, frustration, anxiety and depression because they can not read adequately. The crippling effects of poor self esteem and being labeled "stupid" due to living in a cycle of failure can unfortunately last a long time, if the student has had to wait years before receiving the correct intervention. A final note about obtaining help for the struggling reader who is dyslexic is that the presence of this reading problem in a parent or other family members should serve as an indicator that the child should be screened, as dyslexia runs in families. In fact, some parents, grandparents and others do not realize that they too have suffered from this issue until a child in the family has been diagnosed. As you can see, if parents do not know when, where and how to look, their child may not be accurately diagnosed in a timely way, and fall far behind before any intervention is suggested or given, which can result in a host of academic, emotional and social problems for a child who is already suffering.

Fortunately, we have hope. Scientifically based reading intervention programs such as Orton-Gillingham which are explicit, phonologically based, cumulative, and prescriptive are proven to be highly effective, but parents and teachers have to be aware that such programs exist and are efficacious. My own daughter, who copes with dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder was able to finally receive intervention and successfully graduated from high school and university, is an accomplished musician, leads a Montessori program, and is also a highly respected Certified Orton-Gillingham tutor and Certified Academic Language Practitioner. I have witnessed the powerful effect of appropriate, scientifically based reading intervention programs. I have celebrated with my students who had been in despair when we first met, but have grown to be independent, competent and successful as a result of our work together.

Senators, I urge you to pass this vital legislation. While we have been discussing the needs of connecting children affected by dyslexia as early as possible to break the cycle of failure and thus mitigate their potential suffering, please remember that intervention is possible at any age, and it is never too late. Finally, providing an

effective way for parents and teachers to access needed, timely intervention is life saving for students driven to despair for the lack of it.

Elizabeth H Ryan, B.A. Social Work
Certified Orton-Gillingham tutor
Certified Academic Language Practitioner

Schmidt, Melissa

From: Bentz, Nick
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 3:04 PM
To: Hoey, Joseph; Janis, Nick; Keith, Rachel; Lambert, RJ; Lonergan, Sandy; Mikalsen, Mike; Sargent, Justin; Schmidt, Dan; Schmidt, Melissa; Schmudlach, Shelby; Sen.Bewley; Sen.Darling; Sen.Kooyenga; Sen.Larson; Sen.Nass; Sen.Olsen; Sen.Schachtner; Smith, Sarah; Tomten, Amanda; Youngman, Lori; Zantow, Jenna
Subject: FW: Jan. 22 Dyslexia Bill

Members and staff,

Below is additional testimony for our hearing tomorrow regarding SB 578 and SB 579.

Nick Bentz
State Sen. Dale Kooyenga
5th Senate District
310 South, State Capitol
608-266-2512
Nick.Bentz@legis.wi.gov

Follow Sen. Kooyenga on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
Visit Sen. Kooyenga's [website](#).

NOTE: Emails sent to and from this account may be subject to open records requests and should not be considered private.

From: Sen.Kooyenga <Sen.Kooyenga@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 9:30 AM
To: Bentz, Nick <Nick.Bentz@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: FW: Jan. 22 Dyslexia Bill

From: Mary Jo Bolwerk <mjb4393@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 18, 2020 3:52 PM
To: Sen.Kooyenga <Sen.Kooyenga@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: Jan. 22 Dyslexia Bill

Dear Senator,

I am writing to kindly ask your support for the bills related to dyslexia that will come before you on Jan. 22. Wisconsin is one of only a few states that does not have dyslexia laws in place and we owe it to our struggling kids to move forward in this area. As a high school teacher, I see every day what happens when dyslexia is NOT caught early. Students are frustrated. They act up or they give up. School is a miserable experience for them because they cannot read. When the state of Wisconsin takes steps to address dyslexia, we will see an increase in our reading achievement scores as well as a decrease in our mental health incidents and drop out rates. Reading skills are crucial to success and I look forward to seeing more Wisconsin students succeed when these bills are passed.

Thank you,
Mary Jo Bolwerk

Schmidt, Melissa

From: Bentz, Nick
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 2:59 PM
To: Hoey, Joseph; Janis, Nick; Keith, Rachel; Lambert, RJ; Lonergan, Sandy; Mikalsen, Mike; Sargent, Justin; Schmidt, Dan; Schmidt, Melissa; Schmudlach, Shelby; Sen.Bewley; Sen.Darling; Sen.Kooyenga; Sen.Larson; Sen.Nass; Sen.Olsen; Sen.Schachtner; Smith, Sarah; Tomten, Amanda; Youngman, Lori; Zantow, Jenna
Subject: FW: AB110, SB578, SB579

Members and staff,

The comments below pertain to two bills we will hear in committee tomorrow.

Contact information is included should you have further questions.

Nick Bentz
State Sen. Dale Kooyenga
5th Senate District
310 South, State Capitol
608-266-2512
Nick.Bentz@legis.wi.gov

Follow Sen. Kooyenga on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
Visit Sen. Kooyenga's [website](#).

NOTE: Emails sent to and from this account may be subject to open records requests and should not be considered private.

From: Sen.Kooyenga <Sen.Kooyenga@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 11:17 AM
To: Bentz, Nick <Nick.Bentz@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: FW: AB110, SB578, SB579

From: Betsy Ryan <redbetsy@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 10:54 AM
To: Sen.Nass <Sen.Nass@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Kooyenga <Sen.Kooyenga@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Risser <Sen.Risser@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: AB110, SB578, SB579

Dear Senators,

I urge you to support the bills listed above which relate to the identification of and intervention for dyslexia. As the parent who searched unsuccessfully for years to find appropriate intervention for our middle daughter I know firsthand the frustration, anxiety and great difficulty in trying to identify her learning issue and to arrange treatment for my child who struggled in school from the beginning. Though as bright as her high achieving older and younger siblings, and enrolled in a great school with caring and creative teachers, our daughter could not keep up with her classmates in reading and language related tasks. My husband and I, though well educated in Social Work and Nursing respectively did not know anything about dyslexia, and even with master teachers

and a physician to consult within our family, not to mention easy access to our pediatrician, could not get any answer but to "wait", which is totally and tragically the wrong advice. What parent who truly cares will wait as children fall further and further behind before being able to arrange for help at school, where they spend most of their waking hours feeling totally inadequate; consequently, their self esteem takes a daily beating, and they can become anxious, unhappy and depressed

Parents need access to information about dyslexia and other reading disorders so they can secure appropriate assistance for their child as early as possible. Hopefully, armed with factual information, appropriate screening and timely intervention from dyslexia specialists, parents will not have to witness the untold suffering of hearing, as we did, their fifth grade child tell them that "if this is living, I don't want to do it anymore." You can imagine our distress at realizing the depths of our daughter's despair and suffering. Fortunately, we were able to get her tested and to connect with a program to address her specific learning issues, but it had taken years to know what could and should be done, and not for lack of trying on our part. Well-meaning, well-educated, very caring professionals had just not known the right advice to give us, and our child had suffered untold agonies of realizing she just did not measure up to her sisters or her peers.

(Like many other parents, my experience with our daughter's challenges led me to see what I could do to help. While serving as a reading tutor for 15 years at a local middle school, I encountered students with recalcitrant reading issues. I longed to be better prepared to work more effectively with them, and I completed the training and practicum to become a Certified Orton-Gillingham tutor, and was thrilled and encouraged to see my students make substantial progress in reading and related tasks as well as becoming dedicated, enthusiastic learners while gaining in self-confidence and independence.)

Unfortunately, this scenario is not uncommon; with up to 10% (and some would argue this number is greater) of the population affected by dyslexia, I as a Certified Orton-Gillingham tutor, with advanced training, and as a Certified Academic Language Practitioner, have tutored many children and adults whose academic experience has been fraught with failure, frustration, anxiety and depression because they can not read adequately. The crippling effects of poor self esteem and being labeled "stupid" due to living in a cycle of failure can unfortunately last a long time, if the student has had to wait years before receiving the correct intervention. A final note about obtaining help for the struggling reader who is dyslexic is that the presence of this reading problem in a parent or other family members should serve as an indicator that the child should be screened, as dyslexia runs in families. In fact, some parents, grandparents and others do not realize that they too have suffered from this issue until a child in the family has been diagnosed. As you can see, if parents do not know when, where and how to look, their child may not be accurately diagnosed in a timely way, and fall far behind before any intervention is suggested or given, which can result in a host of academic, emotional and social problems for a child who is already suffering.

Fortunately, we have hope. Scientifically based reading intervention programs such as Orton-Gillingham which are explicit, phonologically based, cumulative, and prescriptive are proven to be highly effective, but parents and teachers have to be aware that such programs exist and are efficacious. My own daughter, who copes with dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder was able to finally receive intervention and successfully graduated from high school and university, is an accomplished musician, leads a Montessori program, and is also a highly respected Certified Orton-Gillingham tutor and Certified Academic Language Practitioner. I have witnessed the powerful effect of appropriate, scientifically based reading intervention programs. I have celebrated with my students who had been in despair when we first met, but have grown to be independent, competent and successful as a result of our work together.

Senators, I urge you to pass this vital legislation. While we have been discussing the needs of connecting children affected by dyslexia as early as possible to break the cycle of failure and thus mitigate their potential suffering, please remember that intervention is possible at any age, and it is never too late. Finally, providing an

effective way for parents and teachers to access needed, timely intervention is life saving for students driven to despair for the lack of it.

Elizabeth H Ryan, B.A. Social Work
Certified Orton-Gillingham tutor
Certified Academic Language Practitioner

Schmidt, Melissa

From: Bentz, Nick
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 9:30 AM
To: Hoey, Joseph; Janis, Nick; Keith, Rachel; Lambert, RJ; Lonergan, Sandy; Mikalsen, Mike; Sargent, Justin; Schmidt, Dan; Schmidt, Melissa; Schmuldach, Shelby; Sen.Bewley; Sen.Darling; Sen.Kooyenga; Sen.Larson; Sen.Nass; Sen.Olsen; Sen.Schachtner; Smith, Sarah; Tomten, Amanda; Youngman, Lori; Zantow, Jenna
Subject: FW: SB 578

Committee members and staff,

Below is testimony for SB 578, one of two dyslexia related bills the committee will consider at tomorrow's hearing.

Nick Bentz
State Sen. Dale Kooyenga
5th Senate District
310 South, State Capitol
608-266-2512
Nick.Bentz@legis.wi.gov

Follow Sen. Kooyenga on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
Visit Sen. Kooyenga's [website](#).

NOTE: Emails sent to and from this account may be subject to open records requests and should not be considered private.

From: Sen.Kooyenga <Sen.Kooyenga@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 9:27 AM
To: Bentz, Nick <Nick.Bentz@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: FW: SB 578

From: Mary Brod <mary.brod1116@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 19, 2020 4:17 PM
To: Sen.Kooyenga <Sen.Kooyenga@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: SB 578

Senator Kooyenga,

Good day. Senate Bill 578 is an amendment to the current law under ACT 166 which requires literacy screening of 4k through 2nd grade using a literacy screener of a district's choice. The assessment must include only two skills; phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge [s.118.016,Stas].

Under the proposed bill, each school must assess pupils in four-year old kindergarten through 2nd grade for reading readiness and existing or potential reading difficulties. This can be accomplished through a voluntary questionnaire about reading difficulties in the pupil's family history. Difficulties with reading and/or dyslexia are inherited. There is about a 40% chance of siblings to have dyslexia or reading issues. Up to 49% of parents of kids with dyslexia may have it also. School districts that have this information early on would know that a potential for reading difficulties or even a learning

disability in reading (dyslexia) may exist. Currently 36 states have some sort of screening for characteristics of a reading disability.

Additionally, the bill requires the use of an appropriate, standardized, norm-referenced, valid and reliable assessment of skills. The assessment will evaluate whether a pupil possesses age appropriate skills in all of the following areas:

- a. Phonological and phonemic awareness
- b. Rapid Automatized Naming
- c. Letter word reading
- d. Picture naming vocabulary

Research from 1986 that continues today confirms that highly reliable and valid predictions of future reading skills are found from these four assessments.

By adding the family history questionnaire and requiring a standardized and norm-referenced assessment with include a more in-depth analysis of reading readiness skills beyond the current minimal skills, students at-risk of reading failure will be identified sooner. Early identification and interventions increase the success rate for students. In fact, one meta-analysis by neuroscientist Nadine Gabb showed that up to 70 percent of at-risk children who receive educational intervention in kindergarten or first grade become proficient readers.

Wisconsin's 4th grade scores on National Assessment Educational Progress NAEP of 2019 indicated that 34% of Wisconsin students are below basic in reading. That is NOT acceptable to me. We can do much, much better.

Sincerely,
Mary Brod, CALP
Middleton, WI 53562

January 22, 2020

Re: SB578 assessments to evaluate reading readiness and SB579 requiring each cooperative educational service agency to employ a dyslexia specialist

Dear Senators:

Thank you for holding this hearing today. I am here as a mom of two children with dyslexia and I support SB578 and SB579. We need to make sure that our state is providing our children with the best possible assessments and resources so that they can be productive citizens.

SB 578, the reading readiness bill, outlines key components necessary to assess for early literacy skills. My own children were in 4k-2nd grade before the reading screenings were made law in 2016 and our district failed to catch our daughters weak reading readiness skills. Current statute only requires assessment in phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge. Expanding the screening to include rapid automatized naming and picture-naming vocabulary will help catch more children at risk for reading failure. Rapid naming assesses for processing speed or executive functioning issues. The ability to process information quickly is crucial for proficient readers. Many in Wisconsin rely solely on public education to assess for reading readiness and don't have the means to do outside testing. These changes would ensure a more comprehensive reading readiness assessment. The fiscal estimate from DPI states that last year \$1.7 million of the appropriated \$2,151,000 was claimed for assessments of reading readiness. As a tax payer, I would like to see my tax dollars put to good use and clearly there is money available to assess for reading readiness. More information on RAN.

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/evaluations/types-of-tests/rapid-automatized-naming-tests-what-you-need-to-know>

Furthermore, SB579 is particularly crucial to provide teachers a local resource for training and questions regarding dyslexia. It is my understanding that CESA were developed to assist school districts to fill gaps in training or staffing. There is currently a huge gap for training and information on dyslexia in Wisconsin. To my knowledge, DPI has given no guidance on dyslexia to schools, teachers or parents. Where do staff, teacher or parents turn when they have questions about dyslexia? If DPI won't provide services or guidance, then the schools can turn to their own CESA for guidance and training. Providing each CESA with a Dyslexia Specialist would evenly distribute dyslexia help throughout the state. We have 83 school districts in my CESA 2 region. I am asking for ONE dyslexia specialist for all of those school districts. Finally, DPI over estimated the cost of a Dyslexia Specialist. I think we would all be Dyslexia Specialists if they were getting paid \$95,000/year. Ziprecruiter lists Dyslexia Specialist average salary at \$54,000/year.

Thank you and please support SB578 and SB579.

Sincerely,

Katie Kasubaski, CALP

Oregon, WI 535754
kkasubaski@gmail.com

Dear Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges, Children and Families Members,

My name is Susan Garcia Franz and my daughter's name is Pacha. She is a senior at Neenah High School and was diagnosed with dyslexia 5 years ago in 7th grade. My daughter had a reading specialist and a math specialist for most of her elementary years and continued to move up in her STAR reading exams but she was not keeping pace with the materials that were being presented. Her teachers often wrote report cards that made statements like "if Pacha would just apply herself and stay focused on her work, she will do better". We heard these comments grade after grade. In 7th grade, the district had invited our daughter to join the project-based learning internal charter school within Shattuck Middle School but did not explain her specific learning disability or reason for moving her in this curriculum. They said I needed to decide quickly and later explained that they didn't have time to meet with all the parents before the children entered their project-based learning program. After multiple behavioral infractions and an expulsion and we were forced to homeschool and asked for a school assessment for our daughter as online schooling was not going to be viable for her. Our predicament may be unique in some aspects but probably sounds all too familiar for children in our state that don't receive the proper reading intervention or assessment and then are deemed "behavioral" problems by the schools. Our dyslexic children want to learn and have a lot to offer but need to be included in the curriculum and the process to identify how they learn and get them the proper tools to learn to read.

SB578 will go a long way to begin the process to better identify through assessments that would expand current reading screening laws for 4 year-olds through second grade. This bill addresses screening for phonological and phonemic awareness, rapid automatized naming, letter-word reading, and picture-naming vocabulary. Children with dyslexia struggle most in these areas and can be helped with better assessment and ultimately better curriculum to address their needs to become better readers.

SB579 will also help to give each CESA district a dyslexia specialist. Each CESA exists to help fill educational gaps and provide professional development and training that would help where current educators may have not received training in dyslexia and ways to teach reading to those with dyslexia. As a parent, I reached out to DPI to get some help for my dyslexic child and I was given several different staff people that each had small pieces of the overall puzzle and none of the information helped my daughter directly with her reading difficulty.

We have obligations as a state to make sure our children are getting appropriate public education. We can continue to improve and these bills will be another step to helping all students succeed especially those with dyslexia.

Sincerely,

Susan Garcia Franz

Neenah WI 54956

TO: Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children, and Families
Senator Kooyenga – Chair
Senator Nass – Vice Chair
Senator Darling
Senator Olsen
Senator Bewley
Senator Larson
Senator Schachtner

Good afternoon, Senators. Thank you for your consideration. My name is Christi Hunter and I am a mother of five from Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. And, since 2016, I am also a dyslexia interventionist and advocate. I am here today to express my support of the proposed bills SB 578 and SB 579, believing they can provide the needed identification and support to families of struggling readers throughout the State.

In 2012 we were told that my oldest son is dyslexic. Sam was 11 when we finally received the diagnosis, even though we were concerned with his struggles in reading, writing, and memorizing his math facts since he had begun schooling at age 5. At the time, I believed many of the myths you yourselves may have heard or are familiar with. I thought (and was told) that he would “outgrow” his struggles, that he “wasn’t trying hard enough,” or that dyslexia was seeing and writing letters and numbers backwards (which he didn’t really do), that dyslexia meant someone could not read at all (which he could—a little); or worse, dyslexics could not be taught to read, write, or spell no matter what approach was applied. I was wrong. SB 578, related to dyslexia screening, could be instrumental for children, like Sam, who struggle with the phonological components or automatic processing of language from an early age. Screening is a necessary first step in remediating reading struggle; and we know that the earlier we can intervene, the better our success.

Now...years later, I have seen firsthand the powerful effect correct information, early screening and intervention, reading science, and ongoing support have on students and their families...when they know and can afford to intervene. Many students, including my own son, become depressed and anxious about their abilities, living with what others deem as “failure” for years. Student confidence begins to soar as their reading improves when they are taught using a Structured Literacy approach. Unfortunately for many families this early identification and effective instruction comes at a steep cost – out of pocket evaluation and screening costs to determine reading deficits and many hours of out of pocket private tutoring after school hours, disrupting down time and family time. Dyslexia affects children from every culture, background, and socioeconomic status. Providing early screening, identification, and quality reading instruction and intervention to ALL STUDENTS (not just those who can afford extra help) is an equity issue that needs to be remedied.

There are over 850,000 students attending Wisconsin public schools and over 60,000 teachers serving them, according to the Department of Public Instruction. As we know, Dyslexia affects as many as 5-20% of the population. So, even if only 10% of those students struggle with reading, over 85,000 students throughout the State can benefit from early screening, intervention, and additional support. But, according to the latest results on the State Forward

assessment, we know that number is even higher. 60% of Wisconsin's 4th graders are not reading proficiently. We also know if a student is not reading proficiently by 4th grade, they often will not be able to read proficiently in 9th grade and beyond. Right now, if a student is struggling with reading, or a parent suspects there is a problem, school districts do not know where to turn. The question begs to be answered: Who is better positioned to identify and intervene with a struggling reader when the timing is most critical (when the student is 5 or 6, rather than 10 or 11, or later? School districts, teachers, and families NEED the guidance, resource, and support that early screening and a Dyslexia Specialist can offer. It is critical that SB 578 and SB 579 be passed to provide school districts with better awareness of dyslexia and its signs, as well as provide ongoing resource and training to teachers that allow for more effective intervention for those who struggle with which is arguably the most essential skill one will ever achieve: Reading. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted on 1/22/2020

Christi Hunter, CALP

Certified Structured Literacy//Dyslexia Interventionist

Decoding Dyslexia-Wisconsin

1280 Promontory Dr.

Lake Geneva, WI 53147

262-812-6616



Decoding Dyslexia Wisconsin

Katie Kasubaski State Lead/Legislative Coordinator
Kari Baumann Advocacy Coordinator
Claudine Kavanagh Education Coordinator

January 22, 2020
RE: SB578 and SB579
Dear Senators:

Decoding Dyslexia WI is a mostly parent-led volunteer grassroots organization of over 600 members. We work throughout the state to raise dyslexia awareness and empower families to support their family members with dyslexia, as dyslexia has no social or economic boundaries. Parents come to our organization looking for resources for struggling readers that they expected to find in the public school system. On any given day, we receive inquiries from members including signs of dyslexia, dyslexia testing and assessment procedures, Federal special needs law, and proper remediation programs for their children with dyslexia that these families were unable to have addressed in their schools.

Therefore, Decoding Dyslexia-Wisconsin supports SB578, the reading readiness bill. This bill will provide school districts with the essential information to identify students who lack the skills required for proficient and independent reading. This bill would assess for the (4) pre-reading and reading skills necessary for positive growth for ALL readers, and that are currently lacking in many districts.. According to the Wisconsin State Journal from October 31, 2019, Wisconsin has the widest racial achievement gap in the nation. Is this a headline we want to keep seeing in Wisconsin, or are we ready to begin actively screening children for poor reading skills? We know that when the needs of struggling readers are identified early, targeted interventions for those areas can begin before the achievement gap is too large to effectively close.

In addition, we support SB579 to have all CESAs hire a dyslexia specialist to assist the school districts they represent. Children with dyslexia, teachers, and families with dyslexic children need an empathetic resource to help school districts understand dyslexia and be able to effectively teach struggling readers. This legislation will effectively create a resource to school districts in every region of the state, which is currently noticeably absent. ALL children deserve to be taught in a way that can provide growth and understanding. Currently many districts are moving forward with ineffective teaching practices and not providing a Free and Appropriate Education due largely to myths of dyslexia and the lack of information on teaching practices that align with the science of reading and are known to not only help struggling readers, but support ALL readers.

We would like to thank each of you for your continued commitment to education and the future of our great state. We have printed out and brought a folder for each of you. These folders contain the letters from concerned parents, community members, and even school board members on the struggles of Dyslexia and how to help. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Decoding Dyslexia-WI
decodingdyslexiawi@gmail.com

January 21, 2020

Dear Senator Kooyenga and Honored Committee Members:

I am here today to give testimony in support to Senate Bill 578 and Senate Bill 579. I have a 10-year son who was going into the 5th grade at a public school in Door County, he was only reading at a pre-kindergarten reading level despite the schools offered interventions. I feel the school was not supporting my son in the best capacity to meet his needs. Like the saying goes, "you can't help what you don't know." Dyslexia is a learning-based disability, and our educators, administrators and school boards need access to resources for our children. Senate Bill 579 will be a great step in providing that resource.

This school year 2019-2020; I made the decision to pull my son from the public education system and relocate him to Illinois for private tutoring. The program we are currently enrolled in is \$19,000 for an 8-week intervention. My son grew 2 grade levels in 8 weeks, I repeat 2 grade levels in 8 weeks. We then were blessed to receive a scholarship through the same program for another 19 weeks. We are currently traveling back and forth from Door County to North Illinois weekly. He is nearing the end of the scholarship term and will finish at a 4th grade reading level. He still needs continued support to continue the growth so we are now hoping the school district will work with us after they have seen the growth. Many people have asked me if the amount of money and time away from home was worth it. To that I say; what if you couldn't read a menu at a restaurant, drive a car because you can't read the road signs, play your favorite video game because it had instructions on screen that you couldn't read? What if you were afraid of sleepovers and playdates because your friends could do things you couldn't. What if you were so depressed because you felt stupid and useless, now what if that was your child, what would you give up to help? Yes, it is all worth it. I have seen firsthand what an effective reading instruction, that meets the needs of a struggling reader, can do. My son's mental health has improved along with his ability to read.

My son was diagnosed with dyslexia in the 1st grade from an outside source, but he had signs way before we received the medical diagnosis. Senate Bill 578 would help schools identify reading readiness in young readers, it can help identify students who do not have the four pre-reading and reading skills necessary for reading growth. Once identified the child could receive proper instruction early so the potential of failure is minimal to none.

With the current State of Wisconsin reading crisis, we need to move forward and help to identify, address, and intervene quickly and effectively to help all children meet their potential. Please put my son and many others in your thoughts when you discuss SB 578 and SB 579.

Thank you so much for you time,

Kari Baumann

Baileys Harbor Wi 54202

Gibraltar School District

Kari8292@gmail.com

January 18, 2020

Chairman Kooyenga and Committee Members

Dear Senators,

My name is Misty Powers and I live in Sturgeon Bay Wisconsin, located in Door County. I am a mother of 4 children. My youngest child, Brooke has been struggling academically since the 2nd grade. Brooke is now in the 5th grade. For years I've had conferences with the teachers to try and figure out why reading and writing are so difficult for my daughter. Never once was dyslexia mentioned to me by any staff from our school district. Starting in the beginning of this school year Brooke could not complete any of her homework. So when I started googling her symptoms, dyslexia came up. I found an organization that would do a screening for dyslexia. It was very pricey but worth trying to figure out why she was not achieving her full potential academically. Brooke's screening demonstrated signs of dyslexia in her reading and writing. Brooke has below average phonemic decoding skills in the 16th percentile (about 84% of her peers decoding at a higher level than she is). I feel if Brooke would of had this assessment 3 years ago the current gap wouldn't be as wide now. This why I fully support SB578.

Brooke is still not receiving the proper help in our school district. This is why SB579 would be so beneficial to my daughter's success in education. I support SB579!

We just started tutoring using a scientific evidenced based program (Barton Reading) which is costing my family over \$600.00 a month. I've had to get a 2nd job to help support the cost. Please move these bills forward to help bring our youngest learners to a higher level of achievement by screening for dyslexia soon enough and by adding a specialist to help guide our public schools in the appropriate direction.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely yours,

Misty Powers

Sturgeon Bay, WI

mistypowers4@yahoo.com

From: Carol Poppy
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 8:48 AM
To: decodingdyslexiawi@gmail.com
Subject: dyslexia legislation

As the mother of a dyslexic student and the grandmother of 2 dyslexic students I know firsthand the struggles these students endure. My grandchildren have had the privilege of private tutoring. The direct phonics instruction they received during tutoring should be available to all dyslexic students(probably 1 in 5 students). This legislation is an important first step in providing appropriate tools to public school teachers to work with these students.

Sincerely,

Carol Poppy
retired K-12 math chairman, Chilton High School, Chilton, Wisconsin
Chilton, 53014

Dear Members of the Senate Committee,

First, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. It expresses the need for and importance of SB578 and SB579, and why I support them. Having a dyslexia specialist and a screening for dyslexia characteristics would have made a difference for our son. The dyslexia characteristics my son portrayed were undeniable. If we would have known 7 years ago, what we know now when our son's school career began, I'd be telling a different story. As a parent, you always fear the unknown. The fear of not knowing 'why' turned into a nightmare. This letter is our story simplified.

Our son is 12, in the 6th grade and he reads at a 2nd-grade level. Two years ago, we received a diagnosis of severe dyslexia. Our son has struggled from the beginning of his school career. The road we've traveled has been tough. Rather than addressing the reason behind his struggles, we were often met with "he's a boy", "he'll get there", "he's not far enough behind", "there's no reason for concern at this time", "he's not trying hard enough", "boys are slower learners", or "your son is his own roadblock". Those phrases will forever haunt me. The impact those comments have played in our son's learning, confidence, social skills, and independence is upsetting.

If it was left up to our school system, our son's learning difference never would have been properly addressed. He would have continued to struggle, left behind, not able to keep his head above water. He was drowning in a sea of ignorance, our harsh reality of unrecognized dyslexia. He now sees a private tutor. Thankfully, by implementing proper instruction following the science of reading, he's making progress. We are finally headed in the right direction and seeing positive change.

Dyslexia was never mentioned by the district. My husband and I came across dyslexia by determination, persistence and a lot of self-education. We wanted to figure out 'why' our son wasn't able to learn or make adequate progress in school. When we mentioned our thoughts of dyslexia to the school (principal, classroom, school psychologist and Assistant Director of Special Ed for our district) that we were having our son evaluated, there was no support. All we received was a simple response of "We don't recognize dyslexia. If that is how you feel, then you can pursue it outside of school." A dyslexia specialist and screening could have prevented this.

A learning difference should not escalate into a disability. We can avoid that from happening by supporting both SB578 and SB579. The past, present, and future all deserve this. Let's change the way this story ends. I ask you to please support these bills.

A mother who holds on to hope for the future,

Nicole Van Ooyen

Appleton, WI 54914

January 21, 2020

Dear Senators on the Senate Universities and Colleges Committee,

Thank you for reading my testimony. I am the mother of an 11 year old boy who is now excelling with dyslexia. This was not the case 5 years ago. It was only through the volunteer generosity of a local organization that I was able to have him screened and then I was trained to tutor him myself at no cost. The organization Lake Superior Tutoring Center for Dyslexic Children and Adults lends out all the materials I need for tutoring for free.

We are an exception to the norm, I am able and willing to tutor my child, many families are not. Many families do not even realize that the difficulties their child faces stems from dyslexia.

When I asked my local school principal how they help and support kids with dyslexia I was told that there was not a large enough population that deemed them address it. It is believed that 1 in 5 people on the planet are dyslexic. That is 6 children in a classroom of 30.

The school could not offer me any information, support or ideas on how to help my child. I am grateful that fate interceded and that we found the Lake Superior Tutoring Center for Dyslexic Children and Adults. The school never told me they were a resource.

This all leads to why I strongly urge you to support:
SB578 (assessments to evaluate reading readiness) and
SB 579 (requiring each cooperative educational service agency to employ a dyslexia specialist)

SB578 would expand Wisconsin's current reading screening laws to 4 yr olds through 2nd graders. This bill specifically requires screening for phonological and phonemic awareness, rapid automatized naming, letter-word reading, and picture-naming vocabulary. Screening of this happening at young ages would help identify dyslexia in children since most people who are dyslexic struggle in most of the areas that this bill requires screening of.

SB579 requires that the Board of Control of each CESA district in Wisconsin would employ a dyslexia specialist. CESA fills education gaps and provides professional development in their regions.

If both of these tools had been available years ago when I spoke with our local school they would have been more educated and aware of how to help us or where to direct us for support.

Thank you for your time and again please SUPPORT SB578 AND SB579!

Jennifer Sauter Sargent
Mother to Lake Sauter Sargent 11 years old

Bayfield, WI 54814

February 20, 2020

Dear Senator Kooyenga and Honored Committee Members:

I write relative to 2019 Senate Bill 579 and the necessity for CESA provision of a dyslexia specialist to its member school districts. As a career educator, I write with hat-in-hand and the recognized humility that classroom teachers in Wisconsin public schools are ill-prepared through baccalaureate degree programs to teach children with dyslexia. Children with dyslexia, teachers, and families with dyslexic children need a new resource to help schools understand and effectively teach children with dyslexia. Your legislative direction can create a regional resource that, in the absence of direction, otherwise is not and will not be available.

As the Admissions Officer for the CESA 7 Educator Preparation Program, I evaluate baccalaureate transcripts of teachers. As a retired school superintendent seeking highly qualified teachers, I evaluated baccalaureate transcripts of teachers. Now, as a member of a school board responsible for ongoing teacher professional development, I evaluate baccalaureate and post-graduate education transcripts. In order to find educator preparation for teaching children with dyslexia, one must dive beyond course titles and into the syllabi for baccalaureate and post-graduate courses to find units of instruction that touch upon dyslexia. Educators know more myths and untruths about dyslexia than they know its factual basis and evidence-based strategies for teaching children with dyslexia. The upshot is that educators participating in child study teams and IEP writing are burdened with a lack of knowledge about dyslexia. And, classroom teachers teaching children with dyslexia, who have scant professional background on dyslexia, act upon plans that are faulted. None of this is by intention. It is the product of an absence of educational preparation, professional resources and professional development. Schools need the assistance of a dyslexia specialist. This provision will not require state funding, but will be paid for by CESA membership and subscription for the specialist's services.

Stephen Seyfer, PhD

Fish Creek, WI 54212

sseyfer@gibraltar.k12.wi.us

sseyfer@cesa7.org

school board member - Gibraltar Area Schools

January 20, 2020

Dear Senator Kooyenga and Honored Committee Members:

I write relative to 2019 Senate Bill 578 and assessments to evaluate reading readiness.

The State of Wisconsin has been engaged in public education since 1848, yet we continue to be presented with challenges in the assurance that public education is preparing children ready for their worlds of college and career. Since February, 1848, Wisconsin has been committed to the education of a literate population, a citizenry that can read and write and engage in the commonwealth of community and state. Today, we cannot sign off on that commitment, because too many children at too early an age do not obtain required pre-reading skills resulting in graduating high school students whose reading competency is far below the education goals of our state. How children begin to read is a clear indicator of how they read in student- and adulthood. And, people who do not read well do not choose to read enough to be the informed citizenry Wisconsin wants and needs.

Senate Bill 578 provides school districts and independent charter operators with the mandate to use reading assessments that will identify students who have and do not have four (4) pre-reading and reading skills necessary for their advancement as readers. More importantly the mandate of skill-specific literacy assessment will identify and screen students who do not demonstrate these four skills into age- and developmentally appropriate reading instruction that will assist and cause them to learn the foundational reading skills we want for all children.

As a retired school superintendent and now school board member, I give testimony that such legislative direction is necessary and desired. Do not leave those responsible for our future literate population at the whim of the latest educational journal or convention speaker's opinion on pre-reading and reading instruction. Instead, be direct and attach phonological and phonemic awareness, rapid automatized naming, letter-word reading, and picture-naming vocabulary to a school district and charter school provider's mandated responsibility to fine screen each child's pre-reading skills. Schools educate children based upon what we know of their learning needs; we cannot educate them if we do not know what they need.

Thank you.

Stephen Seyfer, PhD

Fish Creek, WI 54212

sseyfer@gibraltar.k12.wi.us

Gibraltar Area Schools board member

From: Novak, Margo
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2020 3:54 PM
To: decodingdyslexiawi@gmail.com
Subject: Dyslexia legislation

Please vote for bills SB 578 and SB 579. I am a reading intervention teacher and we are not equipped to handle all of the needs. The early screener and resources would be an absolute gift!

Thanks,
Margo Novak

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NON-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE: It is the policy of the Rice Lake Area School District, pursuant to s. 118.13 of Wisconsin Statutes, and PI9, that no person on the basis of sex, race, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, physical, mental, emotional or learning disability may be denied admission to any school in this District or be denied participation in, denied the benefits of, or be discriminated against in any curricular, extracurricular, pupil services, recreational, or other program. In addition, it is the policy of the Rice Lake Area School District that no person on the basis of gender identity or gender expression, be denied admission to any school in this District or be denied participation in, denied the benefits of, or be discriminated against in any curricular, extracurricular, pupil services, recreational, or other program.

My name is Rachel and I am the mother of 3 children. An 8 year old boy and twin 7 year old girls. My single child and my twins are 13 months apart. I am here today on behalf of my daughter Remiah and my story on the road to dyslexia begins when my twin daughters were about 4 years old. Because all 3 of my children were so close in age it was easy for me to compare how they were growing and developing language. I was, and still am, a very involved mother who loves to read to my children. We would sing nursery rhymes, I would search Pinterest to find fun learning activities, games to learn the alphabet, games and songs for counting, craft projects, felt story board stories, and so on. I loved doing these activities with my children.

I began to notice when we would do these learning games and activities that two of my children seemed to be successfully learning to count, learning their alphabet and remembering colors and shapes. However, my daughter Remiah seemed to be struggling. While she could take cut out numbers and physically put them in the correct order she could not verbally count to 10 in the right order. If I had a pile of magnetic letters in front of her and asked her to find me the "C" she could, but if I showed her the letter "C" and asked her what letter it was she could not come up with the letter verbally on her own. I also noticed when she would be telling me a story she would stop in the middle of it trying to find the right words she wanted to say. Remiah would then change the word she wanted to say to something similar or would perhaps act out the word she was looking for when she would struggle to come up with the word herself.

When I mentioned my concerns to her primary care physician about her struggles with word retrieval she told me "children learn at their own pace" and "don't compare Remiah to her twin sister and older brother". Her words were "she's perfect". And as her mother I agreed. She was perfect. She is funny, sweet, creative, thoughtful, and very bright. But in my gut I just felt something was not right and I was concerned. I asked that she be tested in speech and language before she started school. To put my mind at ease, the doctor put in the order and a few weeks later Remiah was tested by a speech pathologist. She passed her language part of the test by state standards, but they were all only by a point or two. The speech pathologist agreed with me that she noticed Remiah's struggles with word retrieval. Since she technically passed her tests, she recommended Remiah receive speech services. By receiving the speech services, they were able to add in language services despite her passing the language test by state standards. This allowed Remiah to enter 4K with an IEP in speech and language services.

4K was the start of Remiah's school career. She entered school in the same classroom as her twin sister. Her twin sister was a quick learner excelling above expectations in every area of her report cards. However, when I would discuss with the teacher how Remiah was doing I would be told what a hard worker she was, how great she was at perseverance, how well she got along with everyone, and what a great attitude she had. It would be followed up with, she is still struggling to count, know her alphabet, her colors and shapes. She could take felt letters and use them to spell out her name correctly but she could not verbally tell you what those letters were. Same was true with counting, shapes, colors, and so on. This continued the entire school year, despite extra help at school and help at home.

Kindergarten was much the same. By mid-kindergarten she was finally beginning to be able to verbally tell us her letters and numbers but at this point the other children are beginning to read. They were memorizing sight words. While her teacher was concerned, she told me at this age children all develop at their own pace and that she would get it eventually. I was watching my smart, sweet, hardworking daughter fall further and further behind. I decided to take her to the neuropsychology at Children's Hospital in WI to be evaluated for a learning disability. I needed someone to tell me how to help my daughter before she fell so far behind it would be too difficult to get caught back up.

Children's Hospital did 4 days of testing with her. They found her to be of average to high average IQ. They diagnosed her with an expressive language disorder but did not diagnose her with any specific learning disorder. As I was physically leaving their office on that last day, the man who had been going over the results with me casually mentioned to me that if she's still struggling at the end of second grade come back and get tested for dyslexia. I immediately dismissed this suggestion because from what I knew about dyslexia, at that time, it's when you see letters move on the page or see letters backwards. That just was not my kid. I left in tears feeling frustrated and with no answers.

Fast forward to first grade. My daughter is now far enough behind in reading that she is receiving services with a reading intervention teacher. Despite the extra help she is making very little progress. I got called in for a special conference with her general education teacher, her speech pathologist, and her reading intervention teacher about their concerns. They once again tell me what a bright hard worker Remiah is, and how she has such a great attitude, and never gives up but is falling very far behind in school despite the efforts they can see Remiah is making. Her general education teacher suggests I have Remiah tested by the school for a learning disability. I put my request in and they begin testing Remiah. We then set up a meeting to go over the results and once again Remiah scores just high enough that she does not qualify for a learning disability. During this meeting the LD teacher who was there to tell me she does not qualify for her services suggested the possibility of dyslexia. She mentioned some of Remiah's struggles with word retrieval and phonological awareness makes her think of dyslexia. I left that meeting that afternoon and spent the night devouring any information I could find on dyslexia. As I was reading article after article I felt someone was writing specifically about my little girl.

We now enter the current year of second grade. The schools do not test for dyslexia so I had to go on the waiting list at Children's Hospital in Milwaukee to have my child tested. The wait time to get an appointment to be tested is over a year long.

Her first STAR testing for the year at school gave her a score of 1% on her reading test. Meaning 99% of the students in her grade at her school scored higher than she did. And yet, the school says she does not qualify for a learning disability. Intervention seems to be failing her. And we have over a year wait at Children's for any kind of possible diagnosis. During my learning of dyslexia I kept reading about the most successful way of teaching a child with dyslexia is by using the Orton Gillingham reading programs. My school did not offer these programs, so I began with a private tutor twice a week using the Barton reading program which is a branch off of the Orton Gillingham method.

I also received a tip from another mom that a psychologist in Appleton could get me in sooner than Children's for a fraction of the cost to evaluate for a diagnosis. I decided to try it and in January 2020, midway through second grade we finally received our diagnosis for dyslexia. Even with this diagnosis she does not receive any services at school. Her teachers have no training in dyslexia and I am responsible for any help my daughter needs when it comes her learning disability. As far as the school is concerned she officially has no learning disability since they do not look at outside medical diagnosis's.

I'm still very new on my journey of having a diagnosed child with dyslexia. But I have known for 3 ½ years that my daughter needed help. That she was incredibly bright, but learned very differently than my other two children. I repeatedly sought out help from doctors, speech pathologists, general education teachers, reading intervention teachers, and complete strangers. It took 3 ½ years of persistence on my part before finally getting a diagnosis. 3 ½ years of precious time wasted for my child. 3 ½ years of my child struggling and not getting the help she needed. She still struggles and if it was not for the money I put towards tutoring and the time I spend driving her to a different town to get services twice a week she would still not be getting any of the resources she needs. It is my job to educate her teachers on what dyslexia is and how to best help my dyslexic child to read.

A child can be diagnosed with dyslexia at 5.5 years old with 92% accuracy. Research shows that when measures like specialized tutoring are taken in grade 1 80% percent of kids who have difficulty reading can be remediated, meaning their accuracy when reading can be improved greatly. If steps are differed until grade 2, the success rate is 50%. And if remediation is deferred until grade 3, the success rate falls to about 20%. Early diagnosis and intervention is essential to success.

<https://www.todayparent.com/kids/school-age/dyslexia-in-children-screening/>

I often find myself wondering where my daughter would be academically right now if the proper measures had been taken when I first began to express concern about her word retrieval. If I would have found a teacher, or a speech pathologist, or a doctor who was educated on dyslexia and would have recognized the signs right away. If she would have been able to get the proper intervention at school when I first expressed concern instead of just waiting to see if she "gets it eventually" where would her reading levels be right now? I still worry about how the school is going to help her academically when there is no dyslexic reading program in her school. No teacher trained on what dyslexia is or how to help a child with dyslexia. I worry if I'm going to be able to continue the financial burden of paying for private tutors for her since she is not receiving the proper help at school. Statistically 20% of the population suffers from some form of dyslexia. That's 1 in every 5 children in the classroom. It is the most common of language based learning disabilities that cause reading, writing, and spelling difficulties. Most go undiagnosed and without proper help because our teachers are not educated on what it is, how to recognize it or how to teach someone with it. I'm asking on behalf of my child and on behalf 1 in every 5 children in the classroom to pass legislation SB579 relating to requiring each cooperative education service agency to employ a dyslexia specialist and to pass legislation SB578 relating to assessments to evaluate reading readiness. Let's strive to get all our children at grade level literacy skills in the state of WI.

Thank you so much for allowing me the time to tell you my daughter's story today.

January 18, 2020

Senate Universities & Colleges Committee Hearing
Madison State Capitol
2 East Main St.
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to you in support of SB 587 (assessments to evaluate reading readiness) and SB 579 (requiring each cooperative educational service agency to employ a dyslexia specialist). I wish I could be at the meeting to talk with you personally today but was unable to attend. I am concerned about reading struggles of students in our state. I am a parent of 3 children and a licensed teacher in Wisconsin. My oldest child was a bright bubbly youngster who began to struggle academically in middle school. As a parent with a strong work ethic, I was concerned about her academic struggles and the anxiety I began to see in my child. I worked to help her with tutoring and academic needs, but she continued to struggle into high school. I was seeing her give up on her ability to learn and knew that this was not going to lead to the success in life I had hoped for her. I sought counseling and found out her junior year in high school that while she was in AP English she was dyslexic! As an elementary student I had seen some signs of concern when learning to read but she had overcome those initial issues and educators re-assured me all was well. After the diagnosis, I was able to learn about techniques that dyslexics need to learn to decode words. I hired a private tutor and Ashlynn attended tutoring outside of school hours to learn these skills. I saw not only increased ability to comprehend her reading but relief from the anxiety of feeling that she was incapable of learning. The years of frustration and anxiety have taken a toll on my daughter. The good news is that with her Orton Gillingham based tutoring to learn explicit decoding of words she is a successful college student at UW Oshkosh. She still struggles with self esteem and believing she can succeed.

Shortly after Ashlynn was diagnosed I learned more about dyslexia. It is genetic and runs in families. Nearly 1 in 5 students have some dyslexic tendencies and just like autism, it is a spectrum disorder where it can be mild (like my daughter who was a junior year in high school in advanced classes without knowing) or severe. I had my youngest tested as a 2nd grader. He came back through private testing as dyslexic. Evan was eager to learn, and I had raised questions on his struggles for years. He had horrible hand writing and was very overwhelmed with learning to write sentences and read. I chose to wait to send him to kindergarten as an older child with a summer birthday, so he is old for his grade level. In spite of this, Evan did not meet expectations in Kindergarten and his teacher recommended summer school for him which he completed with no significant gains. In 1st grade, we did extra hand writing practice at home and worked with him often, but he was still frustrated and overwhelmed at times by school. By 2nd grade his frustration in writing and just scraping by as an on-target reader had me concerned. When I learned Evan was dyslexic I shared this information with his Kindergarten and 1st grade teachers. As they compared notes about Evan as a learner they found that many times they would need to find a different way to explain a concept to Evan and there would be a light bulb moment where it then made sense to him. Dyslexia is a processing disorder so there were elements of this learning difference they were not aware of. As a licensed educator myself, I know that teachers traditionally have not been trained to know the signs/characteristics of dyslexia nor given tools to help these students.

After the diagnosis, the school psychologist in Neenah agreed he needed Orton Gillingham based instruction to learn to decode words. I was informed that Evan was successful enough in school that he did not qualify for services at school to support his needs. He met benchmarks for expectations for his grade level. I located a private tutor, but she only had openings during the day. I was informed that I could not take him during lunch and part of Intervention time twice a week out of school for tutoring as he would be marked truant. I found another tutor and Evan spends 2 hours after school each week and during the summer to get his tutoring. I have been able to prevent much of the

Committee Members:

January 18, 2020

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anxiety and frustration my oldest child had by giving Evan the tools to be successful. Instead of being in the lowest at grade level reading group, Evan is now in one of the highest in his class and enjoys writing at school! At the start of 4th grade, he had gained 3 reading levels over the summer months due to his private tutoring! He continues on to middle school this fall and has almost completed private tutoring interventions.

Can students be identified who need explicit instruction techniques? Can we prevent frustration and anxiety for up to 20% of struggling readers in our schools? Can students who are given explicit decoding techniques retrain their brain to make more direct connections to decode words? The answer is yes. **If we can PREVENT struggles for students, we will see gains in students' academic and mental health as well. Nothings is more frustrating than not knowing why you can't comprehend what those around you can grasp.** As a substitute teacher in Neenah Public Schools, I have worked with many students who show dyslexia characteristics. Many families cannot afford private tutoring or do not prioritize the time outside of school to help their children. I have researched and found options to support my kids but wish other students did not have to go without the benefits of effective techniques to meet their academic needs.

I urge you to approve SB 578 and SB 579. Screening of children for phonological and phonemic awareness, rapid automatized naming, letter-word recognition, and picture-naming vocabulary can help PREVENT frustration for kids in their learning by providing the proper techniques for support right away. By providing a dyslexia specialist in each CESA school districts will have the resource to help fill educational gaps. If 1 in 5 youth can be identified early and schools are provided with proven techniques Wisconsin students can learn more effectively. Teachers need information to help our students meet their full potential. Please use this letter as official written testimony to be included in the public hearing.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Please help our students across Wisconsin. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Jennifer L. Numrich

Private Math Tutor

Neenah Joint Schools Substitute Teacher/ Library Media Educational Assistant Part-Time

Licensed Math teacher with masters in Math Education

Neenah

WI 54956-5636

NeenahNumrichs@Numrichacademy.org

To whom it may concern,

I am sending my testimony to show a need for the services provided in the bills SB 578 and SB 579. Here is our experience thus far as parents of a 6yo who is likely dyslexic. My son is a first grader. He is a summer baby and in WI that means he is either started on time and young for his class or held back and made to be the oldest. As he is quite tall and perfectly mature for his age, we trusted the school to be able to provide education sufficient for all children who were meant to be in that class while knowing some would be a full year older, maybe more if they were also held back. What we found was we are still questioning ourselves in this second year of actual school-should we have him repeat a grade? Should we provide extra tutoring? What are the areas he is struggling in? We have asked the school for this information and as you will see, this is very limited.

The public school he is in is a "choice" school and my son has received Tier 2 interventions in reading since K. Overall, we have seen him "making progress" on all report cards or still at "limited progress" for most areas. Recently, we have noted a familial link regarding dyslexia and saw that our child was very likely dyslexic, or showing signs enough to prompt us to figure out how to test for it and assess his skills/needs. Things that I would figure out through a variety of resources as red flags were pushing us to move forward in assessing. I thought, as a parent, the school district screened kids for dyslexia in school, and was told this is not the case. I had asked his teacher and reading teacher, very explicitly, multiple times throughout K and 1st grade if they had any concern that he may be dyslexic. Had he been screened, the areas of concern might be apparent. The only answer I was given was "we encourage you to talk to your pediatrician." Had we had a dyslexia specialist in our region (4) I feel I would be much more supported in this journey. Our primary care provider did not know where or how to go about testing for dyslexia and eventually found that we have a learning and development center in our healthcare organization. To assess for and diagnose dyslexia, we need to pay \$1000 here to providers that should be covered by medical insurance, but are not. Tutoring here is also not covered (through the learning center) and a list of "testing professionals" led us to another private place in our area. Schoolhouse Tutoring can assess our son for \$1200 including behavior issues as well as learning disorders. They can write up an official diagnosis as well if we wish, to help support an IEP or legal rights in his future. This all stemmed from a cognitive skills assessment (\$150) we had done at a private place called Natural Learning Solutions, which showed huge gaps (1y 8m) for our kid in his word attack and phonics skills as well as auditory processing. In my short 3 months of understanding dyslexia and school support, I have come to know that a diagnosis by a medical professional does not translate directly into services provided by the school. The school also does not have to accept any diagnosis we obtain, thus, we may end up spending a lot of money on something that really means nothing to the school. Unless the school does their own assessment, they can't, for example, just provide my son Orton-Gillingham based instruction, even though it is the absolute best for dyslexic kiddos. In addition, he has many needs in learning that stem from not forming his baseline of literacy, likely due to dyslexia and the way in which his classes were taught. All through K the focus was on sight words and the ABC's. To me, a person needs to know the ABC's well before jumping to words, and the whole-language based approach is not

helpful for most kids as we see the decline of reading abilities in our WI kids. A dyslexia specialist in each district should help create the foundation for which students learn, knowing what happens when support is not given the right way in the very early years.

Now, as a parent, I trust the school can assist us in our needs here. I also know the earlier one is provided support in learning, the better the outcome. Technically, we are probably a year behind in support. I brought the screening results to the school and asked to talk to a school psychologist as well so we could start, what I thought, would be an assessment done by the school. When I brought my concerns to school, noting that the screening test we did, the signs we see, and the support he is getting at school coupled with his STAR assessment (which "all first grade teachers have chosen to disregard here at our school" – he landed in the severe intervention category), the discussion with teachers and school psychologist resoundingly reflected that "he'll probably grow out of it," "he just needs to focus," "he's not bad enough" and "we don't assess all kids or everyone would have a need." I repeatedly asked how they know where my son's needs are, and was met with blank, cold stares and basically told he won't qualify for special education, because he is doing "ok enough, though still at least 6 months behind his peers" so we don't assess unless he is failing and needs 2 tier 3, more intense, interventions, and he won't be provided those interventions because he is making some progress. Though as a parent I also know I am not comfortable waiting to see if he grows out of it, when an assessment via the school is 1, my right to request, and 2, able to help show that he actually is fine, or does indeed have needs. In my, small, non-educational focused nurse mind, if there is a problem, you find the root cause and treat all aspects, you don't just fix the broken bone of a dehydrated diabetic, you fix the dehydration, the low blood sugar, and the broken bone. I just do not understand how I can have this concern, that could affect EVERY aspect of my child's future, and have absolutely no resources in the school I am at. I am lucky to have family who works in the education field and can help support me on this journey, as well as resources noted below that I found on my own.

I was encouraged by the decoding dyslexia page to talk to the DPI rep for my area who was more than helpful and connected me to the district head of student services (over the special education dept) who again was more than happy to help me and made things very simple. He made it clear to the school psychologist that this is indeed an assessment they must provide and that I was requesting from the school a comprehensive evaluation of my child's needs as a learner. I thought things would go smoothly after asking for this assessment and having his help, but they did not. Nothing is easy as a parent who is educated on some, but not all of the needs our kiddos have. I can only imagine the struggles of kids who do not have a parent like me to question things. I was asked by the school psychologist, after I sent in a official referral request letter (which she at first, again, blew off) as guided by decoding dyslexia advocates, for exactly which areas I needed him to be tested in-OT, Speech, etc-what are the concerns that validate each therapy? I was cold-called in the end of a workday with two people on speakerphone trying to assess my request. Mind you, this was the point of the meeting I had set up the week prior, to talk about our needs and what I assumed would be a plan to move forward with assessment. I felt distraught, crazy, like I was making things up at this point because the red flags that seem so obvious to us, were not listened to by the staff

when I did share them, they also were not reflected with teachers until I mentioned them, and it became clear the teachers truly have ZERO knowledge of dyslexia! They couldn't answer me on whether they thought he was dyslexic or not because they do not know anything about it! WHAT! How do we have college educated teachers who know nothing about learning disorders? This proves a clear need for a dyslexia expert in each region, who is accessible by all parents and oversees the screening of all children for potential learning disabilities. All children should also be screened, with an actual screening tool (it is my understanding the "screening" does not have to be an actual test of any sort), and supported accordingly. My son is in the 10-25% of learners and this is apparently the hardest age to figure out whether they do grow out of issues or whether there are greater needs. Not once was an assessment discussed, progress made known to us as parents in the intervention he was getting, or ideas to improve his weak areas at home, because they do not know his weak areas! We struggle every, single, day to manage the 5 page reading assignment he has consisting of short, repetitive words a kid his age should know. We watch him excel in so many areas, only to come crashing down the second he needs to do something he is likely truly unable to do. Here we sit, a week into the official "request for assessment process" and will be waiting for likely a full 60 days to receive assessment results, coordinated by the person we have been instructed to trust and use as a resource and confidant for this entire situation, the school psychologist who has blown off every word thus far. I have come to understand she is struggling to understand this request as it is not typical that red flags are raised at home (while school does agree once I bring them up, but only if I do and also point out the connection to dyslexia). We are also "on the list" to be seen and evaluated for dyslexia through our learning and development center which is a year and a half wait.

Now, imagine my experience had the school noted in K that my child was amazingly creative but potentially dyslexic, that they screened him routinely in November, for example and it showed he was indeed lacking skills that are common in dyslexics like phonemic awareness. Then, they told us things we saw on the screener we just paid \$150 for. On top of that, they explained it all well and offered resources for us to use to help him at home and in our future. Instead, we fight, day by day, because the world of education is apparently an us (parents) against them (school) situation where we need to try to educate ourselves with resources only some are able to find.

Please, for the love of my sanity and the future of all children, pass SB 578 and SB 579 to implement screening for reading skills and deploy a regional dyslexia specialist in every region throughout Wisconsin. It seems much easier to do that than retrain all educators and change college curriculum to bring more awareness in this area!

Thank you,

Gabby Hansen

I thank you for your time in advance for reading about my "journey with Dyslexia".

It started 6 years ago when my daughter was entering kindergarten. As an avid reader myself, I have read to both my children since they were born. So, it was very surprising to me when my oldest entered into kindergarten, extremely behind all of her peers. The counselor at the school called to ask if Petra could be put into a program called Target Time. She was taken out of class every day to go read with another teacher. In parallel, I was in constant communication with the counselor to understand what we are working towards...what are the goals for Petra.

On paper the progress was slow, but at home it was a daily struggle to work with flash cards and small readers. My child was exhausted, and I look back at those moments and want to burst into tears at how much I was pushing something on her I now know was not remotely effective for her.

As the years progressed, they were filled with calls and progress meetings with the school. Regular communication with each of her teachers, each time I was told...wait until 2nd grade because then we can test her. Second grade comes and goes, she is tested and tagged with a "Learning Disability in Reading". She is now put into special education and it is a rinse and repeat of questions, new techniques, progress reports I don't understand because my daughter is not reading any better. Because of this, we are now looking at extra help needed in math...surprising because up until word problems are introduced, she performed at the top of her class in Math.

At the same time this is happening, I am also doing what I can to find an answer, figure out why my very intelligent daughter was struggling the way she was. Her eyes don't work...binocular separation...enter Vision therapy. It worked a little.

Because she never crawled, we were told to put her in occupation therapy to work on her cross-brain development, improving motor and cognitive skills. It worked a little.

Each year that passed made both my husband and I feel even more helpless to find a solid answer. Yes, we have explored Dyslexia, but were told the school cannot speak to this or test specifically for this. We were told, it was highly unlikely she was dyslexic. They didn't ask if a parent has dyslexia...and we didn't know to tell them because my husband has long suspected himself as dyslexic. Dyslexia is hereditary. Unfortunately, at the time, we could also not afford to spend \$5,000+ to get her formally tested.

Third and fourth grade are further rinse and repeat of the previous years, with very little progress and more light leaving my daughters eyes. She is more aware of her "differences" and now other students are noticing too. Bullies...tears...temper tantrums...and above all EXHAUSTION because she works 10x harder to keep up with her peers EVERY SINGLE DAY. This was further confirmed by each of her teachers telling us the same thing. In fourth grade we took a different approach, build her strengths...take time out to go skiing (something she loves), and have more fun! Spend no more than 20 minutes on homework a night. I see the light slow return to my daughters eyes. 😊

As she was preparing to enter 5th grade, I looked up one last resource and as luck would have it...we confirmed...PETRA IS DYSLEXIC, all the struggles can be summed up with 1 single word!

We are fortunate and can make the \$400/month payment in private tutoring work, and in the 5 months since we have started this...Petra is already reading at a 2nd grade level, up from the kindergarten level she read at entering 4th grade.

But...this letter is not about dyslexia education, but approving the necessary legislation to help parents like me navigate through these reading challenges. At the end of the day, if the teachers I was working with had only been educated in Dyslexia or other reading disabilities...we could have saved some of my daughter's self-esteem, decreased her tears and would be in a very different place right now.

I implore you to please, PLEASE approve Senate Bill 578 and 579.

It won't help me so much as the 1 in 4 other students struggling with Dylsexia.

Kind Regards,

Phoebe Sederstrom