

Chairman Lipps and Members of the Health Committee,

My name is Mike McGovern and my son Connor has dyslexia.

He was not identified as having dyslexia until 6th grade and even then the evaluation was from a third-party NOT the school district itself.

This led me to become President of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) in Central Ohio.

Dyslexia is not the reversal of letters. They do not see backwards. It is not a vision issue. It is a neurological issue. As compared to non-dyslexia learners those with dyslexia use a different part of their brain for manipulating sounds and shapes of letters.

Having dyslexia is not a disability. It is a different style of learning. We must identify those with dyslexia and teach them how *they learn to read*.

Neurologically we know some people are left-handed and we address it accordingly. Neurologically we know some people have dyslexia and we need to address it accordingly. HB436 does this.

Since my son was not screened for dyslexia in kindergarten he fell further and further behind in reading every year. He suffered both emotionally and socially. Eventually he received counseling for anxiety and depression, which are common with those struggling to read. He wanted to read chapter books so badly like his peers but he couldn't. **He will never attain his full potential with his reading skills all due not being identified in kindergarten.** It is too difficult to fully remediate when you discover it at the age of 12.

This same story can be repeated by hundreds of thousands of families in Ohio.

He went to Marburn, a school that specializes in dyslexia and ADHD, for several years and had private tutors. I spent about \$100,000 so he could learn how to read. My son will graduate from college in May. I am not here for him. I am here for all families that have children in Ohio that have dyslexia that do not have the resources so their child can be identified and then taught how to read.

As a board member for IDA for 9 years I handle our helpline. I have personally spoken with over 1000 parents from all backgrounds around Ohio. This includes families in rural areas, small cities, suburban and urban areas. The heartbreak I have heard repeats itself over and over.

Children and families are suffering so much because most children are never identified as having dyslexia. So many families have had their child held back in school and made to repeat a grade. This does nothing to address or fix the problem. It only serves to add to the humiliation and embarrassment. Having all children screened for dyslexia and teaching them how they learn will stop these heart breaking stories.

I tell families all the time "your child is not broken the system is broken".

Ameer Baraka a former prisoner with dyslexia and now an author of a book stated:

“As a kid, I used to ask God to make me a drug dealer, because I knew in order to be someone in life you have to learn to read, and I couldn’t.” After being identified as an adult he stated, “When I learned to read, it freed me.”

Today Federal prisoners are screened for dyslexia but children in Ohio are not.

According to extensive research, as stated by Yale University, 1 in 5 have dyslexia.

As you consider the merits of this bill please remember this critical data:

According to ODE’s document “Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy”

- 62% Ohio’s 4th graders are **NOT** proficient in reading
 - 64% Ohio’s 8th graders are **NOT** proficient in reading
- Since 2007 Ohio reading levels ranged 66% – 61% of those **NOT** proficient in reading

According to U.S. Dept of Education “Nation’s Report Card” from 2017

- 63% 4th graders are **NOT** proficient in reading
 - 64% 8th graders are **NOT** proficient in reading
 - 63% 12th graders are **NOT** proficient in reading
- **Summary:** Since 1992 U.S. reading levels have remained 63% - 71% of those **NOT** proficient in reading

You cannot argue with decades of low reading statistics. Our system for identifying reading issues is broken. Our programs to teach reading are broken.

There is no defense of the current system employed to identify and address literacy issues in Ohio. Every system is perfectly designed to achieve its current results and the system in Ohio is producing failure. ^[1]_{ISEP}

Please look at the chart on Bethlehem, PA school district. In 2015 the district wide reading proficiency level was at 47%. In just 3 years of using Structured Literacy it went to 84%. Fall 2018 this story was on the front page of the New York Times.

MRI’s clearly show that people with dyslexia use different circuits to process reading and writing. We can only find that out if we screen them for dyslexia.

Once we determine they have dyslexia we can teach them based on how they learn to read and write.

At their core, schools top priority is to teach a child how to read.

There is nothing more important than reading.

Without requiring proper screening and professional development approximately 350,000 will not become proficient readers

The language in HB 436 has been reviewed by a group of dyslexia experts who's combined experience exceeds 100 years of studying research, providing training and teaching. Scaling back this language will cause more children to fail in reading for the rest of their lives.

At some point you are likely to hear from those opposed to this bill. They may claim funding challenges or training challenges or other reasons. You will be hearing from some school superintendents who have publicly stated they support screening and professional development but they need additional money to do this.

But as you will hear from other educators testifying today what is in HB 436 has already been done in several school districts without additional funding.

More importantly when some of those superintendents resist supporting HB 436 they are NOT taking the responsibility for their core mission, which is to teach reading to the 1 in 5 children in Ohio that have dyslexia.

Ask yourself is this a reasonable request?

Shouldn't they already have to teach the 350,000 children how to be proficient readers?

All districts have an **ethical** and **moral** duty to find out how each child learns to read and to teach them accordingly.

For thousands of children I am asking you to make this a **legal** duty by passing this bill.