**Proponent Testimony**

**Lori Baldridge**

**House Bill 436**

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Health Committee, my name is Lori Baldridge. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of the Dyslexia Screening and Professional Development bill, HB 436.

 Over my 27 years as an educator, I have seen firsthand the effects of undiagnosed dyslexia and the lasting impact it can have on a student’s education. House Bill 436 will ensure that school districts all across Ohio are taking the proper steps to catch dyslexia at an early age. My experience with Dyslexia does not stop at the door to the classroom. Our daughter, Alyson, struggled with reading through most of her time in elementary school. We spent years searching for solutions and watching in anguish, as our daughter would struggle through her school work.

As I was completing my Master’s program at Xavier University, I met Dr. Richard Sparks, a professor and reading specialist. Through our interactions, we were finally able to properly diagnose Alyson, and get her the help that she so desperately needed. The road following diagnosis for a 3rd grader is not an easy one, but she was able to succeed. Alyson has earned a college degree and is currently employed in a county government position. Even though her dyslexia can still affect her, she now has the skills to be able to tackle those challenges. If we could have identified her condition earlier, her treatment would have been significantly easier.

I hope that through this legislation we can identify students who are struggling with Dyslexia and provide them with the assistance needed, so other families do not have to go through the same strife. Most families don’t have parents working in education or cross paths with professors who specialize in reading. Without the help of Dr. Richard Sparks, our daughter Alyson may never have been properly diagnosed. We can help students who don’t have a parent involved in education by screening at an early age and providing educators the tools they need to recognize signs that their student may need help.

Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony. I stand ready to answer any questions this committee may have.