

My name is Mike McGovern and my son Connor McGovern has dyslexia. This led me to become President of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) in Central Ohio and join Marburn Academy's Board - a school that specializes in dyslexia and ADHD. My son Connor was not identified as having dyslexia until 6th grade and even then, the evaluation was from a third-party NOT the school district itself.

Instead of IDA's definition of dyslexia, which is a bit complex, I will explain it in easier terms. It is not the reversal of letters. They do not see backwards. It is not a vision issue. It is a neurological issue. When you are learning shapes of letters and the associated sounds of that letter you must be able to put those together to understand letters and words. People with dyslexia struggle with this skill. As compared to non-dyslexia learners, those with dyslexia use a different part of their brain for this skill and the part of the brain they use is not good at this task.

They don't reverse "b" and "d". Instead, they can't remember which one to use because they are so close in shape. When you are not skilled at this it makes it hard to remember which is a "b" and which is a "d". It is not that they are reversing. Instead, they are NOT remembering. According to extensive research at Yale University 1 in 5 have dyslexia. 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 to not being identified in kindergarten. It simply takes too long to remediate when you discover it at the age of 12. He went to Marburn for several years and had private tutors. I spent over \$100,000 so he could learn how to read. I am not testifying here for him. I am testifying 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.

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. The children have had to suffer the humiliation and embarrassment that comes with reading struggles. 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. I tell families all the time "your child is not broken the system is broken". Having all children screened for dyslexia is a major step in stopping these heart-breaking stories.

HB 436 was passed in April 2021 and was a monumental step in addressing the dyslexia problem in our schools. Among other things, HB 436 did the following:

- Required the Department of Education to establish the Ohio Dyslexia Committee (ODC) consisting of 11 members appointed by various appointing authorities.
- Required school districts and other public schools to administer annual dyslexia screenings, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year.
- Required the Ohio Dyslexia Committee to develop a dyslexia guidebook for screening, intervention, and remediation for children with dyslexia or displaying dyslexic characteristics and tendencies.
- Required the Ohio Dyslexia Committee to prescribe the number of clock hours of dyslexia-related professional development required for teachers.

SB 168 proposes to undo many of the great things HB 436 enacted just 2 years ago. There has not been enough time from when the bill passed to truly evaluate the effectiveness of the legislation. Schools have just begun doing mandatory screenings this year. Why would the legislature make such significant changes to a law before all the children it seeks to help have even been screened for dyslexia? I am specifically requesting the following regarding SB 168:

- Lines 3413-3418 and changes in lines 3430-3431 and 3437-3438 should be eliminated from the bill. The Ohio Dyslexia committee should determine the appropriate number of hours for professional development as HB 436 intended. School districts should not police themselves in this regard.
- Lines 4406-4410 should be removed. Screening should be happening every year K-3. For example, if a screening happened in the fall of '22 in Kindergarten and the fall of '23 in first grade, the previous school year screening results are not relevant to the student's current developmental stage of reading.

If this committee wishes to make changes to the current dyslexia screening law (HB 436), I and the dyslexia community have several other changes we would like to see incorporated into the bill. We would be happy to discuss those changes with the bill sponsor and this committee. However, as I noted previously, changes in this bill will not help the children in Ohio and I strongly object to any changes right now. Thank you for your time.