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Senate Bill 200 Testimony October 29, 2019

Members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for hearing Sponsor Testimony on Senate Bill 200, which regards professional development for intervention for children with dyslexia. This bill is meant to be a complement to SB 102, which deals with the side of screening children for dyslexia.

It is estimated that at least 5-10% of the population has dyslexia¹, with that number being as high as 20% in some studies². Because dyslexia is a common learning disability, screening children is an important first step towards helping children with dyslexia or dyslexic tendencies. However, helping these children overcome their dyslexia to become proficient readers requires specific and effective intervention. Children with dyslexia do learn differently than their non-dyslexic peers and their teachers need to be properly trained if they are to be successful.

Currently, 22 states require professional development specifically related to dyslexia be offered to teachers. Of those 22 states, six require that teachers actually complete professional development in a dyslexia-specific topic.³ By requiring teachers receive at least some initial training on how to teach students with dyslexia, we are helping students become better learners and also giving teachers the tools to teach those students in a meaningful way.

SB 200 will require the Department of Education (ODE), in consultation with IDA, to maintain a list of dyslexia professional development courses, which may consist of online or classroom learning models. Approved courses must align with the guidelines adopted by ODE, be evidenced-based, and require training for both

¹ <http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/answers/faq>

² <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/dyslexia-faq/>

³ https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/State_Inf_Request_State-Dyslexia_Policy.pdf

identifying characteristics of dyslexia and understanding the pedagogy for instructing children with dyslexia.

Under this legislation, new public school teachers would complete an initial dyslexia screening and intervention professional development course. Teachers or specialists providing instruction in special education, English language arts, or literacy must also complete additional approved courses on a regular basis. It is up to the district's discretion to choose an approved course from ODE's list of professional development courses.

Another important aspect of SB 200 is the structured literacy requirement, which would require each school district to establish a structured literacy certification process for teachers providing instruction in grades K-5. This process must be developed with ODE's guidelines and requires a practicum in structured literacy.

The benefits to providing children with dyslexia intervention at an earlier age, means these children will be academically more successful, have fewer social problems and be more likely to graduate and lead successful lives. Ohio has wonderful teachers, but by giving them additional resources for dealing with dyslexic students we are giving them the tools to be even more successful.

Thank you and we are happy to take any questions you may have.