

Chair Lehner and Members of the Education Committee,

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 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 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. He is just finishing his second year in college. 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. This bill will begin the process to fix this issue.

As a board member for IDA for 8 years I handle our helpline. I have personally spoken with over 500 hundred 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 will be a major step in stopping these heart breaking stories.

At their core, schools top priority is to teach a child how to read. There is nothing more important than reading. At some point you are likely to hear from those opposed to screening a child for dyslexia. They may claim funding challenges or training challenges or other reasons.

When they resist supporting SB 102 they are NOT taking the responsibility for their core responsibility, which is to teach reading to the 1 in 5 children in Ohio that have dyslexia. This represents about 350,000 children. All districts have an ethical duty to find out how each child learns to read and to teach them accordingly. This bill will begin that process.

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% for 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

Since 1992 U.S. reading levels have remained 63% - 71% for 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.

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%. Last fall this story was on the front page of the New York Times and was also made into a podcast.

If we identified and properly taught this large segment of the student population how to read the societal benefits would be massive. It would help the economy, it would lower the prison population, it would lower support services and it would very quickly improve the emotional well being of so many children.

MRI's clearly show that people with dyslexia use different circuits to process reading and writing. This means they learn to read and write differently. 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.

Kindergarten Performance Before and After Science of Reading Training

<https://www.apmreports.org/story/2018/09/10/hard-words-why-american-kids-arent-being-taught-to-read>

SCHOOL (low-income%)*	2015	2018
Asa Packer (28%)	47%	95%
Calypso (63%)	35%	100%
Clearview (66%)	51%	100%
Donegan (97%)	30%	69%
Farmersville (28%)	64%	93%
Fountain Hill (90%)	28%	60%
Freemansburg (83%)	51%	93%
Governor Wolf (54%)	36%	76%
Hanover (13%)	70%	100%
James Buchanan (55%)	60%	72%
Lincoln (78%)	32%	83%
Marvine (94%)	40%	72%
Miller Heights (26%)	62%	98%
Spring Garden (41%)	51%	92%
Thomas Jefferson (73%)	75%	92%
William Penn (77%)	42%	81%
DISTRICT (56%)	47%	84%

SOURCE: Bethlehem Area School District. *Low-income is defined as the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, 2017-18.