

Testimony to the Ohio Senate Education Committee

S.B. 102 - Proponent Testimony

McGraw-Hill

October 15, 2019

Chairwoman Peggy Lehner, Ranking Minority Member Teresa Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Mary Eisele, and I am the Director of Product Management for Direct Instruction Programs. My colleague is Divya Sridhar, Policy Advisor for Government Affairs at McGraw-Hill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on S.B. 102 – V 6, which would establish a Dyslexia Screening Program for Ohio.

McGraw Hill is a global learning science company driven by a vision to help unlock the full potential of each learner. Embedded in our DNA is a belief in the power of learning data that gives educators a deeper understanding of their students' strengths and weaknesses and propels each student on a personalized path to success. We employ more than 750 Ohioans and are proud to call Columbus home to our PreK-12 School Group at Polaris. We take great pride in our local connections that help make our community stronger.

My team and I would like to share our support for the important policy that Senators Lehner and Brenner are proposing, with regard to students with special needs, and in particular, students with dyslexia. I am sharing the company's support for early identification and intervention of students with dyslexia. We believe it is fundamental to provide students with the opportunity to build their foundational skills in reading and better support students with strong reading, literacy, and English Language Arts skills early in their learning journey.

Remarks on S.B. 102 – V6

McGraw-Hill commends Senators Lehner and Brenner on their proposal to better prepare students with specific learning disabilities. S.B. 102 establishes a dyslexia screening program to ensure that, through reading instruction and assistance programs, each student will be screened for indications of dyslexia at least once prior to entering first grade. S.B. 102 also ensures that each district or school shall provide to the parents of students identified as at risk of having dyslexia, information about the learning disability and recommended Structured Literacy programs and services.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities suggests that fewer students each year are being identified with specific learning disabilities (SLD), causing more students to fall behind in their reading and literacy coursework by the first grade.¹ Nearly one in five students suffers from one of the most common types

¹ <https://www.nclid.org/archives/blog/the-state-of-ld-understanding-the-1-in-5>

of SLDs, such as dyslexia. Dyslexia² is one of the largest categories of specific learning disabilities across the 13 disability categories under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and it accounts for a substantial portion of allotted special education funding.

Policy makers are increasingly being made aware that too few students are being identified and provided the crucial supports to treat dyslexia, which is why more states are taking action to encourage early identification and screening of dyslexia.

Structured Literacy is Effective Instruction for Students

McGraw-Hill recognizes the importance of incorporating a range of reading programs and approaches to support students with dyslexia, as recommended by literacy experts. In fact, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) recently shared a memo supporting the range of programs and methods that fall under Structured Literacy, including Direct Instruction.³

The intent of S.B. 102 is to permit the use of Structured Literacy as effective instruction for students with reading difficulties. To be most effective, McGraw-Hill believes that structured literacy programs must align to principles that are incorporated into any intervention provided for students with dyslexia. This instructional methodology is successful as it aligns to principles of instruction including comprehensive, cumulative, systematic, and highly explicit instruction. Additionally, this approach to reading instruction can be beneficial not only for students with dyslexia, but for other at-risk students.

Two examples of evidence-based approaches that effectively serve students with dyslexia include McGraw-Hill's *Reading Mastery* and *Corrective Reading*. These programs utilize structured literacy instruction, with explicit design and delivery of the lessons, which is systematic and cumulative, and addresses all levels of language, including sounds, symbols and word parts. *Reading Mastery* and *Corrective Reading* employ multimodality within the explicit context of reading and writing (as is suggested by Center on Effective Reading Instruction). Both programs require students to pronounce sounds and words accurately and quickly for automaticity, and further require writing of words. Thus student hear a word, say the word, read the word, and write the word (auditory, visual, kinesthetic).

McGraw-Hill Can Serve as a Partner and Resource on Dyslexia

MH is a partner to key districts across the state who use Structured Literacy Direct Instruction programs. A few examples of our partnerships with districts and schools include: Washington Local Schools; Preble Shawnee Schools; Northwest Local (Cincinnati); N College Hill (Cincinnati); New Richmond; Fairland East Primary; Parma City Schools; Cleveland City Schools (Mound Elementary); Princeton Schools; and Lakota Schools.

² As defined by the International Dyslexia Association. See more here: <https://dyslexiaida.org/definition-of-dyslexia/>. Dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia are three of the largest specific learning disabilities (SLDs) as defined by the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

³ <https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/disability-resources/specific-learning-disabilities/dyslexia-and-dyscalculia/structuredliteracybrief.pdf>

In addition to our partnership with these and other large school districts across the state, MH is actively working to build strong relationships with a number of thought leaders and dyslexia advocacy groups, such as the International Literacy Association and Decoding Dyslexia, to shape the guidelines for students with dyslexia across the country.

Again, we applaud the proposed policy to support students with dyslexia by requiring early detection and intervention services. McGraw-Hill Education understands the importance of ensuring students have the fundamental reading skills to build a strong foundation for their early education courses.

Please do not hesitate to use McGraw Hill's experts as a resource, as S.B. 102 makes its way through the legislative process. Thank you for your time and consideration. My team and I are happy to make ourselves available for any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Mary Eisele

Director of Product Management, Direct Instruction

McGraw-Hill

Divya Sridhar

Policy Advisor, Government Affairs

McGraw-Hill