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Pannone Family  
7 Robin Road  
Sharon, MA 02067

RE: S. 294, S. 313, H. 330, and H. 2872

Dear Chairwoman Sonia Chang-Dias, Chairwoman Alice Hanlon Peisch and members of the Joint Committee on Education,

We are writing, once again, to share our experiences with educating our dyslexic children in the public school system. It is because of negative events, we are in full support of early screening and a science based definition of dyslexia. We would like to see improved outcomes for future families and spare them the anguish we've lived through.

We started our journey with our now 10 year old daughter. She is thriving and doing well after seeking remediation on our own, at our own expense, and with no assistance from our district. We are grateful to have reached some success after years of challenges, but have just begun to navigate the situation with our 6 year old son. Still in a bit of disbelief, I share that his story is even more heart breaking than his older sister's.

Max began his school career with the utmost enthusiasm and excitement. He could not wait to get to kindergarten. He counted down the days until he could walk with his siblings and the neighborhood children to school. He made friends with ease and was thrilled to attend every day. At pick up, he'd dump his backpack with paper evidence of his positive experiences.

In the early days with our older daughter, we didn't know why she wasn't able to make progress with her reading and writing. This time, we were armed with practical knowledge. Before his first day, a letter was sent to his teacher letting her know that Max had challenges learning his letters and numbers. In November, we had our first parent/ teacher conference where we learned that our son was unable to make progress in those areas within the general education classroom. Response to Intervention was implemented to try and meet his needs. Even as he moved through the tiers and began being pulled out by "Reading Specialists", little to no progress was made. Our son was acutely becoming aware that he was not able to keep up with his same aged peers. This caused him a great deal of anxiety, depression, and took a heavy toll on his well being.

Over several months, we watched as our son began withdrawing from his teachers and his school. We began to worry about his health as he began coming home extremely angry every afternoon, began refusing to eat meals, and showed signs of regression (sleep disturbances, requiring comfort objects to get through the day, etc.). We all agreed that the pull outs were causing more harm than benefit, so they were discontinued. Our once eager student was losing hope.

Eventually, by April, Max could no longer attend school. He was tested and found eligible for an IEP to address his SLD in reading. Sadly, it was too little, too late. After months of struggle and pure torture, time had run out for Max. He developed a deep distrust in teachers and school. This would feed his anxiety and would prevent him from being able participate in the school environment. Max knew he could no longer survive in those conditions and begged to be homeschooled. We had no choice but to withdraw him and begin therapy to rebuild this little boy's self esteem and confidence.

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Max is still healing from what was a very stressful and traumatic event for him. We have hope that he will regain what was stripped from him and will become a resilient child with a renewed love for knowledge. It was an unfortunate chain of events that we'd like to see improved for other young, vulnerable children.

The ability to screen children in kindergarten holds the promise of a solid start to a student's educational career. Rather than employing the wait to fail approach, a young student can have their needs properly met in a timely fashion and when it can be most productive. Ideally, with an instructor trained in the multisensory, systematic, explicit methods that have evidence based proof to be most effective with the dyslexic child.

As we have experienced, leaving it all to chance can cause neglectful and unethical damage to a young child. We urge you to move this bill from the committee quickly and to accept a science based definition of dyslexia. There are many dyslexic children who deserve to have their needs properly defined and met.

Thank you for your time and work on this issue!

Sincerely,  
Andrea and Pasqualino Pannone



Max on the first day of school August of 2016