



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MA 02133-1054

**THOMAS M. STANLEY**  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
9TH MIDDLESEX DISTRICT  
Thomas.Stanley@MAhouse.gov

VICE CHAIR, JOINT COMMITTEE ON MUNICIPALITIES  
AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON REVENUE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POST AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT

ROOM 167 STATE HOUSE  
BOSTON, MA 02133  
TEL: (617) 722-2230

7/11/2017

The Honorable Alice Hanlon Peisch, Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
Massachusetts House of Representatives  
State House Room 473G  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Sonia Chang-Diaz, Chair  
Joint Committee on Education  
Massachusetts Senate  
State House Room 111  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairwoman Peisch and Chairwoman Chang-Diaz,

Hope this note finds you well. I am writing to you today to urge favorable action on House Bill 330 - *An Act relative to defining and providing screening for dyslexia*, and Senate Bill 313 - *An Act relative to dyslexia*. As a co-sponsor of both H.330 and S.313, I believe the bills will greatly improve the quality of life for the twenty-percent of children who suffer from dyslexia in the Commonwealth.

As you know, Dyslexia is common among individuals with language acquisition difficulty that may affect speaking, reading and/or writing. Dyslexia occurs when children are born with language cells located in the right hemisphere of the brain (eighty-percent of the population is born with language cells in left hemisphere). Dyslexic children struggling with reading and writing are at risk of low self-esteem, teasing, bullying, anxiety, depression, school phobia, acting out, dropping out, substance abuse and anti-social acts. Dyslexia is relatively easy to cure as long as it is diagnosed before age 9. One year of Synthetic Phonetic Educational Intervention rewires or moves the language cells in the right hemisphere of a dyslexic person to the left hemisphere, resembling the language cells of most people. After age 9, the brain is less plastic meaning that the language cells are unable to transfer from the right hemisphere to the left hemisphere. Unfortunately, public schools in Massachusetts do not screen 5 and 6 year olds for dyslexia when it can be easily diagnosed and treated, leading many to fall through the cracks and require costly treatment after age 9.

H.330 is new legislation filed by Representative Chris Walsh that defines learning disabilities like dyslexia as most recently defined by the National Institute of Health, that are neurobiological in origin. The bill would also require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to issue guidelines for districts, to develop more targeted screening procedures or protocols for students for potential indicators of a neurological learning disability including, but not limited to, dyslexia. These indicators are Phonemic Awareness (PA), Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) and Letter Sound Knowledge (LSK). Dyslexia Screening (DS) in the Commonwealth would include valid and efficient screening of these three indicators.

S.313 defines "dyslexia" as a neurological learning disability. Current Department of Education regulations regarding dyslexia are not based in science and are therefore, considered discriminatory. S.313 also mandates for school districts to screen students for dyslexia and other reading disabilities no later than the first semester of second grade. The bill then tasks DESE with drafting regulations to develop screening procedures and/or instruments to identify students with one or more indicators of dyslexia.

Dyslexic individuals often possess special talents for understanding patterns, making unusual connections, and seeing easily in three dimensions. These unique abilities have led many with dyslexia to become mathematicians, engineers, architects, entrepreneurs, athletes, entertainers, and artists. Diagnosing and treating dyslexia at a young age greatly increases the ability for dyslexic individuals to fully use these gifts and become productive members of society. Therefore, I respectfully request once more for the Joint Committee on Education to approve of these common sense measures and both H.330 and S.313 out with a favorable recommendations.

As always, thank you very much for your time and consideration on this matter. Please don't hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Stanley

