

Testimony in Support of HB 410

My name is Marissa Massoni, and I am a supporter of SB 410. I am part of a student group advocating against poverty. Education is a powerful tool against poverty, so we have chosen to support this bill, which enriches the education of Kansas students struggling with learning disabilities. HB will ensure that all students enrolled in Kansas public schools are screened for dyslexia and other reading disabilities. It will also allow the board of education to establish and enforce best practices for the treatment of reading disabilities.

Dyslexia and learning disabilities are enormous obstacles to literacy. According to the Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities Organization, dyslexia and other learning disabilities are marked by different neurological pathways. This makes reading difficult to impossible because the child's brain struggles to process aspects of spoken or written language (Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities, 2008). Children with dyslexia may also have difficulties with math or speaking. Early intervention, like the kind proposed by SB 410, is vitally important for LDs (Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities, 2008). Learning disabilities are biological in nature, but with treatment, kids can learn to read just as well as children without learning disabilities.

What sort of consequences follow untreated or poorly treated LDs? Children face academic struggle, occupational difficulties, and can even suffer economically. According to G. Reid Lyon, Chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch of the National Institute of Child Health & Human Development, 75% of high school drop outs report having difficulty reading, and only 2% of children who have had special education for reading difficulties will complete a four year higher education program (2003). In 2011, Cindy Long of the National Education Association found that poverty "compounds" reading difficulties to make poor children especially vulnerable to dropping out (2011). Without a high school diploma, these children can be trapped in low-wage jobs.

The proper identification and treatment of learning disabilities is one way to stop the cycle of poverty. Kansas children are worth "best practices!"

Sources

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