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KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Mark Desetti, Testimony  
Senate Education Committee  
March 14, 2018  
Sub for House Bill 2602

Madame Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today in support of Sub for House Bill 2602.

This bill came about after a hearing on a bill mandating dyslexia screening for all children in public schools. In that hearing many issues were raised – issues of concern from parents of students with dyslexia and issues of concern for special education directors who administer many different interventions and have to comply with both federal and state regulations. Both sides had legitimate concerns.

Dyslexia screening and identification has been an annual topic in the legislature for as long as I can remember. The issue has been addressed in many different ways over the years but never to the complete satisfaction of both the parents and the special education administrators.

Some of the points that need to be deeply explored when considering the best way to meet the concerns of all are:

- Is annual screening of all students really necessary? Is it even appropriate to screen all children upon enrollment?
- Are schools prepared to conduct screening for dyslexia specifically? Dyslexia is a medical diagnosis and school personnel are not trained in or permitted to make such a medical diagnosis.
- School districts can and do screen children for reading disabilities and provide special education services to those who are identified. Do these services adequately address the needs of children with a professional diagnosis of dyslexia?
- Is there adequate training for teachers – including pre-service training – in the identification of reading disabilities and interventions?

I, like the parents who will speak to you today, have a child who is dyslexic. He struggled in schools and went undiagnosed. Because he had two teachers for parents and nearly unlimited support from home and from great classroom teachers, he managed to do well until the work load became too much for him in high school. My wife and I took him to a medical professional for assessment and he was diagnosed with dyslexia.

In the case of my own son, he was diagnosed with dyslexia and dysgraphia by a licensed psychologist. We notified his school of the diagnosis and the school immediately re-convened the IEP team to discuss adjustments to his program of support.

The schools in Kansas worked with him before he was diagnosed and they continued to provide excellent services after the diagnosis. The diagnosis merely gave the IEP team more information to guide their decision making.

This bill will require a deep analysis of the issues raised by both the parents and the special education directors with the support and guidance of the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education. From that work will come recommendations for the best way to address the legitimate concerns of parents within the requirements of the federal special education law.