
March 13, 2018

The Honorable Molly Baumgardner and Members of the Senate Education Committee
Kansas State Capitol, 224-E
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Senator Baumgardner and committee members:

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute written testimony for Substitute for House Bill 2602. I am writing in opposition to the makeup of the legislative task force on dyslexia. The task force's charge is to "make recommendations...concerning the use of evidence-based practices for students with dyslexia" (lines 6-8 of the bill).

Of the 19 members comprising the task force, only one is definitively steeped in evidence-based reading practices for students with dyslexia and that is the one member who is "a professor employed by a state educational institution with specialized expertise in effective evidence-based reading practices for dyslexia" (lines 5-7 in the bill). Whereas the higher education faculty must have the expertise, all other members need no evidence-based expertise to be named to the committee. I question the discussion dynamic of the task force to meet its charge with such little expertise on the committee. Given the charge, I also question the voting and power dynamic of the committee with so many members not having a background in dyslexia. Given the charge, I also question that four members are parents of children appointed by key for networking, families together, and decoding Johnson County. Decoding Johnson County is part of Decoding Dyslexia KS which indicates on its website <https://decodingdyslexiaks.wordpress.com/> that "Our group is made up of parents of children who are dyslexic. We are not experts, nor are we a business or educational organization." How is a non-expert going to contribute to fulfilling the charge of the committee?

The bill appears to intentionally limit the presence of Kansas higher education faculty who prepare teachers, reading specialists, and special educators and who have doctorates in reading and reading disabilities and do research in these areas. Why are not Kansas higher education faculty with expertise in reading disabilities much more represented on this task force?

This is a flaw readily addressed without increasing the overall of committee members. My recommendation is to have the task force's charge reflected in the committee makeup by including more experts in evidence-based reading practices and having fewer non-experts.

Sincerely,



Kenneth A. Weaver, PhD
Dean