

Testimony in support of House Bill of HB 2552

An Act Concerning Education;

Kansas Reading Readiness Act amending SA 79-32, 117

Given by: Jeanine Phillips, Executive Director

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Good afternoon honorable members of the Kansas House of Representatives. Thank you for your service to the citizens of the Great State of Kansas. In addition, I want to thank you for your attention to the literacy crisis facing our kids. Thank you, Representatives Erickson and Williams, for your authorship and sponsorship of this Bill.

My name is Jeanine Phillips. My background includes a BA in Elem. Ed., and MS in Adult Education. I have always loved to teach. For the past 20 years I have been the Co-Founder and the Executive Director of Fundamental Learning Center (FLC) in Wichita, Kansas. *FLC is a 501(c)(3) educational organization established in 2000 to enlighten parents, educators and the related public to the educational needs of a child who struggles to learn to read, especially those who are dyslexic.* Over the course of the past 20 years, FLC's dedicated and passionate staff have provided thousands of parents and educators across the state and nation with evidence-based and proven literacy methodologies that work to teach literacy-resistant children to read, write and spell.

As many non-profit organizations start, FLC established its roots with a personal story, one experienced by my co-founder, Gretchen Andeel and myself. Our experiences created the personal realization, cause, and mission that opened the doors for others. 1990 was the year I realized my personal mission. That was the year my youngest, Cooper, medically struggled to survive his kindergarten year in Littleton, Colorado, because he was an unidentified dyslexic. Since 1990, I have had the opportunity to meet many of the top scientists who study dyslexia, have attended hundreds of hours of specialized conferences, workshops, courses, and programs of promise. Since Cooper's diagnosis of dyslexia in 1991, in Kansas, I have spent my professional career gathering research-based knowledge that improved his life as well as the lives of the thousands of children, their parents, and educators. I was inspired by the fact that Kansas refused to identify dyslexia in the classroom when Cooper was 7. By 1992, science had proven that dyslexia was a specific learning disability, genetic, and affected 20% of the population. Furthermore science factually stated the evidence-based methodology needed to teach any child to read, write and spell, understood and proven through the research results garnered by the National Institutes of Child Health & Development (NICHD).

When I first traveled to Topeka to introduce my cause related to dyslexia to the State Board of Education in 2001, I shared the national low-literacy concerns reported in the National Reading Panel Report (1998). This

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report focused on the fact that 40% of our nation's children were reading below proficiency. But to my dismay, the Kansas education system strongly argued that parents in Kansas shouldn't worry. "Kansas was teaching children how to read." I knew differently. I had attended a conference that focused on the 1998 NAEP scores. The 1998 NAEP Kansas scores reported 63% of our Kansas fourth graders were reading below proficiency! During the next 13 years of testifying in Kansas, I continued to focus on the NAEP scores. Other states were gaining on our Kansas kids. The Dept. of Ed. continued to say children were being taught to read but NAEP scores continued to show differently. Kansas scores remained flat (never varying more than 1% up or down for 20 years while other states slowly improved), until 2019. In 2019, Kansas 4th grade reading scores fell 4 points. Today NAEP reports 67% of Kansas 4th graders are reading below proficiency.

The time is now. Our kids, dyslexic or not can't wait for school-based solutions. *The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence & crime is welded to reading failure - US. Dept. of Justice. *75% of unemployed adults have reading or writing difficulties - National Institute for Literacy. *70% of the inmates in America's prisons can't read above the 4th grade level - Proliteracy. *43% of Americans with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty. 70% have no job or a part-time job - National Institute for Literacy. **The Kansas Reading Readiness Act** is just one step in many that Kansas must take to address this crisis.

I applaud all New sections of HB 2552 and encourage each and every one of you to pass HB2552. We are in a state of emergency and many solutions will need to be put into place to save our children! As I ended many testimonials in the past, "Please do the right thing". Pass this Act.