

Dear Senate Members,

My name is Eddie Gibson and I am the middle child of five dyslexic children. I am 17 years old and a graduating senior.

I have been in the fortunate process of filling out many college applications. All of which have had supplemental essays that have had a common theme. Describe who you are and why do you want to attend our school. This may seem like an easy question to many but for me, it stirs up many emotions. My elementary school teachers were not trained in the science of reading therefore they did not understand that I was dyslexic. They did not believe that I could be both smart and require reading and writing interventions. I would often be told that I could not participate in recess until I caught up on classwork, I would be isolated in the storage closet and told I could leave once I learned my spelling list but most often I was told to just try harder. My teachers simply could not understand why they could demonstrate a skill and I could tell it back to them but not put it into writing, they did not understand dyslexia. My parents had to seek outside evaluations, tutoring, and legal representation to secure appropriate academic interventions and services. This process took ALL of my elementary school years. It was NOT until middle school that I started to receive minimal appropriate academic interventions at school. My parents continued to fight for my academic rights but they recognized that time was running out.

It was then that my parents decided that they had no alternative but to send me to Jemicy, a small private school for children with learning differences. Jemicy was transformative. I felt that I could be both dyslexic and smart. At Jemicy I was taught with explicit systematic intentional instruction throughout the school day the way that I needed and I was truly able to excel. At Jemicy I have participated in academically rigorous classes like Russian Literature and Calculus which have helped to restore my self-esteem. With my restored self-esteem, I have been able to take my love of learning outside of the classroom and I have taught

myself the Russian language. My passion for the Russian language enabled me to win the highly competitive National Security Language Initiative for Youth scholarship through the state department which would have had me studying abroad to live in Moscow for the summer to continue my language acquisition of Russian. Unfortunately, the pandemic turned my program virtual but I am happy to report that I am a semi-finalist for this upcoming summer.

This is why I know that with appropriate academic screening and interventions dyslexic children are capable of anything. I am imploring you to support the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation, SB 126 & HB 0237, sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole. The dyslexia task force met from 2015-2016 and found that Maryland's 25 local school systems would benefit from guidance on the best practices for reading and dyslexia. We can do better. I know from personal experience that teachers and administrators need guidance as to how to help dyslexic children. No more children need to suffer the way that I had to. We can do something about this and it is by passing SB 126 & HB 0237.

If I had had an early screening done by my elementary school they would have had their own data-driven interventions. I know that there are many more children just like me that deserve to be taught and know that they are dyslexic not dumb.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Edward Robert Gibson

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