

Senate Testimony SB 126.pdf

Uploaded by: Carr, Stephanie

Position: FAV

Testimony to the Senate *Education, Health, Environment Affairs Committee*
In Support of Senate Bill 126
State Department of Education-Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices-Guidance and Assistance
Stephanie Carr: Decoding Dyslexia Maryland
January 27, 2021

My name is Stephanie Carr, and I am a former high school general education teacher, current Co-Chair of Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee for Howard County, one of five founding members of the Decoding Dyslexia Howard County Chapter, and most importantly a parent to three children with disabilities who all share dyslexia. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 126 which would result in the creation of a Reading and Dyslexia Handbook that would provide much needed guidance to the local school districts of Maryland on changing the long-term practices of reading and literacy instruction that have not provided all children with the basic ability to read.

Reading is at the epicenter of education. Without the ability to auditorily process appropriate sounds in pre-kindergarten; without the ability to sound out words due to circumstances or lack of appropriate first instruction; without the ability to grasp the multitude of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and language rules of the English Language; students will be sent down a path of compounding academic difficulties that leads to low academic achievement and a range of mental health effects that creates a lifelong trajectory of socio-economic outcomes that crosses multiple generations.

As a former high school general education teacher from Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County, I experienced firsthand the damage that inappropriate core instruction at the elementary level inflicts, how the lack of evidence-based interventions was unable to remediate the skills students did not have, and the inability for students to comprehend curriculum required to graduate. By the time a student enters ninth grade, the gap between a student's grade level and their academic ability had grown so wide that the focus is not on the long-term effects of the inability to read proficiently but on passing standardized tests and graduating on time. Fortunately protocols to combat these practices will be outlined with the passage of the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook bill. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will be providing local districts guidelines to provide evidence-based interventions for students through twelfth grade. Local school districts will be responsible for providing appropriate core instruction and a system of reading supports from pre-kindergarten through high school which enables students to receive help in the appropriate skill deficit regardless of grade. The handbook will be a resource for general educators on the definitions and characteristics of reading difficulties, dyslexia, and dysgraphia.

Between my educational background, personal experience in the system, a parent of children with different disabilities, and as Co-Chair of SECAC in Howard County, I have worked with a multitude of parents across three Maryland counties since 2016. Every single child I have been involved with has had reading struggles. Many of those students are identified with an SLD in Reading/Dyslexia, along with co-morbid disabilities of Dysgraphia and ADHD. While each student's IEP is different, one problem is obvious, the student, while making progress on their IEP goals, is not closing the achievement gap and unable to meet grade-level

standards. Each school has its own culture, and the lack of specific guidelines regarding reading has caused inconsistency in identification, remediation, and what is considered best practices for reading instruction. The Handbook bill will provide a much-needed outline for consistency and best practices involving screening for reading difficulties, literacy and reading instruction, interventions, accommodations, and even specially designed instruction for students identified with a Specific Learning Disability in Reading/Dyslexia.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an environment that students who struggle academically will have regressed and suffered a loss of learning. Students with reading struggles and/or disabilities, along with other vulnerable populations are doubly impacted as they cannot receive the in-person teaching that is so critical to make progress, and they are struggling to access the online instruction due to their circumstances. Many students do not have the ability to read the online presentation and follow multiple step processes necessary to learn in the current technological environment. The passage of the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook bill will offer direction in dealing with learning loss by providing guidance for screening protocols, evidence-based interventions, and specially designed instruction.

As a parent of three children with dyslexia who have been identified at three different times in their educational career, I have watched my children suffer both academically and emotionally. The emotional toil of not being able to read as well as their peers was equally as devastating as the academic struggles. As many as 20 percent of children with dyslexia also suffer from depression and another 20 percent suffer from an anxiety disorder (<http://www.dyslexiadx.com/articles-unlocking.php>). Having a handbook to aid educators in identifying and intervening during the early years of education, possibly avoiding the adverse mental health consequences for struggling readers and children with dyslexia.

In Maryland pre-pandemic, only 41% of students are meeting grade level standards in reading and writing as measured by the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) scores in English Language Arts for third grade. Lack of proficient reading is one of the primary causes of the achievement gap for marginalized students. Roughly 11% of students with special needs are meeting proficiency standards. English Language Learners are slightly better at 13.7%. Around 27% of African American and Hispanic students are meeting grade level standards with students receiving Free and Reduced Meals are at 23% (<https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/>). Studies show that “[a]bout 16% of children who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade do not graduate from high school on time--a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers.” [Hernandez, Donald J., Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011.](#) Without early identification, evidence-based reading instruction, and intensive interventions, the difference between good and struggling readers only widens over time.

Twenty-three states, including Texas, California and New Jersey, have Early Literacy and Dyslexia handbooks that guide implementation of their state literacy requirements. Senate Bill 126 would create a stakeholder advisory group charged with developing a handbook with the following components:

1. Definitions, indicators and characteristics of reading difficulties, dyslexia, and dysgraphia
2. Best practices for reading screening, identification of reading difficulties, instruction, and assessment and interventions for dyslexia
3. Helpful tools and materials to support teachers and parents; and
4. Designation of a dyslexia liaison at MSDE who would facilitate technical assistance to local school systems.

Senate Bill 126 is a cost-effective way to bring Maryland schools into alignment with the research on how students learn to read. While the fiscal note indicates that MSDE will need an additional position to support the dyslexia liaison role, the bill clearly states that MSDE is able to appoint an existing member of its staff to perform these duties along with current responsibilities. In July of 2020, Dr. Karen Salmon, State Superintendent, sent a letter to Delegate Luedtke that stated, “Although we are not able to add another position to our staff at this time, I’m pleased to say that our English Language Arts (ELA) Coordinator possesses many of the necessary skills and knowledge to provide those supports to our educator.” An individual has already been identified who can fulfill this role. Dr. Salmon also stated that this position was already working on guidance to implement the Ready to Read Act and had created a stakeholder focus group “to elevate high-quality and evidence-based literacy.” This bill would merely expand and formalize the work that MSDE has already begun. The bill reduces the certification requirement of the liaison from a Dyslexia Specialist to a Dyslexia Interventionist because an interventionist does not require the MSDE employee to be actively working with students. The liaison will be given eighteen (18) months to obtain the certification if the individual is not already certified. It is our belief that the fiscal note overestimates the cost and that this bill will be cost neutral and result in long-term savings by reducing special education costs by addressing reading challenges in the general education setting through evidence-based core instruction and multiple-tiered systems of support.

This bill makes no attempt to interfere with local school districts’ ability to decide on specific interventions and instructional materials. Rather, it will provide a one stop shop of resources for improving student outcomes in reading and providing best practices for helping children with dyslexia. The resources, materials, and information laid out in the Handbook will help guide administrators, educators, and parents on standards, instruction, and practices to be used in and out of the classroom. This handbook was recommended by the Legislature’s Dyslexia Task Force, which found that parents and experts had trouble getting educators to recognize dyslexia and provide appropriate instruction and interventions to remediate students with dyslexia.

There can be no doubt that this guidance is needed when approximately 55-60% of all children are not meeting grade-level expectations on the MCAP ELA exam across all tested grades (<https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/>). The academic effects of the COVID pandemic are already present and recovering the learning loss will be insurmountable without additional

support for educators on appropriate instruction and interventions for struggling readers and students with dyslexia. This Handbook also supports the implementation of the Ready to Read Act and will guide school systems on collecting data from the screener and align supplemental reading instruction and interventions to students' areas of need. The handbook will give school districts guidance and shine a light on practices that support struggling students *to help prevent and close academic gaps*.

I urge a favorable report from the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee and for the Senate to pass Senate Bill 126 to create a Reading and Dyslexia Handbook Bill in order to support the local school systems in the endeavor of teaching reading to ALL children.

Testimony In Support of Dyslexia Handbook HB 237 S

Uploaded by: Ceruolo, Rich

Position: FAV

January 12, 2021

RE: SB 126 / HB 237
Maryland Senate / Miller Senate Office Building
Attn: Education, Health and Environment Affairs
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD. 21401

Testimony in Support of SB 126 / HB 237.

Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance.

Hello and good day.

I wish to communicate my support of the Dyslexia bills being proposed this legislative session; SB 126 / HB 237. It is estimated that as many as 43.5 million Americans have Dyslexia. Reading is fundamental to learning and tied directly to a student's future success.

I am the parent of a child with multiple challenges and disabilities. And I am also now an advocate for children with disabilities. Dyslexia is hereditary and multi-generational in my family and in so many others across our nation and world. My brother, my Dad, oldest son and myself are just a small sampling of citizens that wrestle with Dyslexia's challenges every day.

Reading is the cornerstone of education. Without the ability to read, students cannot progress and learn effectively in an education setting. Their future success hinges on developing the ability to read.

Therefore, I fully support the establishment of a steering committee, advisory group and creation of a dyslexia guidance handbook. Advisory members should be from all over the counties and entire state of Maryland, and reflect the rich diversity and variety of demographics present across our state.

Working together, the advisory group can craft a Dyslexia guidance handbook, recommend reading remediation programs and materials that best address the many challenges related to Dyslexia.

As a member of Decoding Dyslexia of Maryland and Parent Advocacy Consortium, I know that organizations like ours have a treasure trove of peer reviewed, science-based research, and experience to share. We would be pleased to provide this vast knowledge with the House Ways and Means Committee, MD's House of Delegates, The Maryland Senate and The Dyslexia advisory group in any capacity needed.

Please return a favorable report and move forward with SB 126 / HB 237 so that MD's State Dept of Ed. will be tasked with identifying, and servicing all children with dyslexia across the entire state of Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo. Parent, disability rights advocate, and adult living with Dyslexia.
3 Carvel Rd.
Annapolis, MD 21409
(410) 212-6001 | richceruolo@gmail.com

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0126.pdf

Uploaded by: Conner, Charles

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

CHARLES R. CONNER III, ESQ.
Director of Government Affairs

JOEL N. BELLER
Deputy Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: **SB 126**

TITLE: State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia
Practices - Guidance and Assistance

SPONSOR: Senator Hester

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: January 27, 2021

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 126 – State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance. This legislation would establish a stakeholder advisory group to develop a reading and dyslexia handbook.

Dyslexia is considered to be the most common learning disability impacting children, but most schools often do not have adequate resources to provide these students with the help they need. The proposed legislation will bring together experienced experts who can provide schools with a system of evidence-based intervention for helping dyslexic learners. The handbook developed by this group will be made available to the public by July 1, 2022. This guidance will help educators better understand and provide for all of their students, no matter how they learn.

As a former educator, Baltimore County Executive Olszewski understands the vital importance of giving students the support they need so they don't fall behind. This legislation is a commitment from the State to dyslexic students and an investment in their future academic success.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 126. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Director of Government Affairs, at cconner@baltimorecountymd.gov.

MSCNAACP Testimony in Support of SB 126.pdf

Uploaded by: Dillahunt, Adrienne

Position: FAV



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 126
State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and
Assistance
Ways and Means Committee
January 27, 2021

The Maryland State Conference (MSC) of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) strongly supports Senate Bill 126 requiring the state of Maryland to provide Maryland school districts with a roadmap to improve early literacy instruction and dyslexia interventions that would create support materials to guide implementation of the Ready to Read Act.

The NAACP works to ensure that all disadvantaged students and students of color are on the path to college or a successful career by ensuring access to great teaching, equitable resources, and a challenging curriculum. We are dedicated to eliminating the severe racial inequities that continue to plague our education system and impact the way in which all programmatic decisions are reviewed and challenged. Literacy is a civic right and an essential gateway to students' success. Our ultimate goal is that every student of color receives a quality public education that prepares young people to be contributing members of our democracy. To achieve these goals, the NAACP Maryland State Conference advocates around a four-prong strategy to improve educational achievement for disadvantaged students by:

- Increasing Resource Equity: Target funds to neediest kids
- Ensuring College & Career Readiness: A path to success after graduation for all students
- Improving Teaching: Growing our own great teachers now in underserved communities
- Improving Discipline: Eliminate zero tolerance; keep kids in school

It is for this reason that we urge the State of Maryland to provide Maryland school districts with a roadmap grounded in the science of literacy instruction and evidenced-based practices for dyslexia interventions designed to guide implementation of the Ready to Read Act. In the Nation's Report Card, the percentage of students in Maryland in Grade 4 who performed at or above the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Proficient level was 35 percent in 2019. Furthermore, a highly disproportionate number of our Black and Brown students with learning disabilities, lack the basic literacy skills needed to achieve success in school, post-secondary education, gainful employment, and meaningful civic engagement. In effect, this literacy gap may serve as a consequential stepping stone to the school-to-prison pipeline where we see 85 percent of juvenile offenders in the U.S. have trouble with reading, according to the

Literacy Project Foundation. This should be an alarming, warning sign that our students need and deserve a coordinated state-wide vision and action plan to reimagine literacy instruction while working hand-in-hand with teacher preparation programs at our Schools of Education.

In the implementation of this legislation, the NAACP MSC joins the Decoding Dyslexia Maryland Advocates in calling upon the General Assembly to:

- 1) Require the State Department of Education to establish, by October 1, 2021, a stakeholder advisory group to develop a reading and dyslexia handbook to guide local school systems in the implementation of best practices for early literacy and dyslexia;
- 2) Require the development of tools and materials to address the needs of at-risk and struggling students with dyslexia;
- 3) Require a completed handbook be made available to the public by June 1, 2022;
- 4) Require the Department to update the handbook every three years

Support for the Maryland Reading and Dyslexia Handbook will:

- Create a stakeholder advisory group of educators & dyslexia community members to collaborate on a Reading & Dyslexia Handbook.
- Provide guidance for general & special educators and families on best practices to identify & remediate students with dyslexia and reading difficulties.
- Develop a definitive, publicly available resource for educators and families on reading and writing assessment, instruction, intervention, and accommodations for use in the classroom and in the home;
- Allow Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to expand an existing position with the department to serve as a dyslexia point of contact, an important cost-saving measure that allows the department to leverage existing resources and;
- Enumerate evidence-based components/elements needed for instruction, interventions, professional learning, and assessment/screening.

Equity should be a means of providing access, opportunities, and supports needed to help students reach their full potential by removing barriers to success. Literacy is liberation and the foundation for all students to thrive. For these reasons, The Maryland State Conference urges the committees to issue favorable reports for Senate Bill 126.

Adrienne Dillahunt, NAACP MSC
Education Co-Chair
District 29B

Laura Johnson, NAACP MSC
Education Co-Chair
PCDistrict 13

Willie Flowers, President
Rev. Kobi Little, 1st Vice President, and Political Action Chair

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Uploaded by: Emerson, Corinne

Position: FAV

Senate Testimony SB126 Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices

I am an Anne Arundel county resident and parent of a student with reading difficulties. Our child has been raised in Crofton, MD with all the benefits of an upper middle class family: attending a high quality preschool and growing up in a household full of children's literature. Yet, when we started Kindergarten with AACPS our child had not mastered his letters or letter sounds. Our Kindergarten teacher first notified us that our child had difficulties with phonological awareness, or the recognition of individual sounds in words. Our child received weekly lists of sight words from his school to memorize but could not recognize the word cat as being made up of three letters, c-a-t. When we requested additional reading supports last January, our child was placed in a Response-to-Intervention (RTI), a progress-monitoring program that is the equivalent of a wait-and-see. When the pandemic hit last March, our child was still reading at a Fountas and Pinnell level A, the lowest rating for prereaders. Last month AACPS screened all Kindergarteners and 1st graders for reading difficulties students for reading difficulties in accordance with the 2019 Ready to Read Act. Although these screening results have not yet been released to parents, we were informed by our school just last week that we were admitted into the reading intervention program, nearly a year after we first requested it.

Early screening and intervention is critical for remediating literacy problems. If a child cannot read by the 3rd grade, they are more likely to have reading problems for the rest of their lives and/or end up in the criminal justice system. I ask you: If this was the experience of an upper middle class family in our county, what hope can a child attending one of our Title 1 schools have of obtaining functional literacy? Our poorest families have been the hardest hit by this pandemic and are least likely to be able to pay for private assessments and tutoring. We are facing an epidemic of illiteracy in our county and our state. We must act to enable the MSDE to establish a list of best practices for assessment and remediation of reading difficulties. The current piecemeal approach with each county having its own implementation will not suffice. I urge you in the strongest terms to support this bill.

Sincerely,
Corinne Emerson
Crofton, MD

Senate Bill 126 - Dyslexia Handbook.pdf

Uploaded by: Faulkner, Rachael

Position: FAV



Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: Senate Bill 126 – State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

School psychologists provide comprehensive services to Maryland's students. This includes the screening, assessment, and intervention of reading difficulties and dyslexia. We work closely with teachers, special educators, reading specialists, and speech/language pathologists, among others, to provide support to struggling readers in our schools.

The Maryland General Assembly passed the Ready to Read bill in 2019, which outlines procedures for screening of early literacy difficulties in young students. Senate Bill 126 follows that legislation in that it would create an advisory group charged with creating and maintaining a handbook that provides school systems and staff with the most up-to-date science on reading difficulties. The handbook also provides guidance for school systems on evidence-based interventions and screening programs for such difficulties. This is a resource desperately needed, as it has been our experience that schools often lack understanding of the most current reading science to the detriment of their students. MSPA is grateful for the opportunity for a school psychologist to serve on this advisory group, and we look forward to contributing to positive reading outcomes for our students.

MSPA is in strong support of Senate Bill 126 and we respectfully urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please feel free to contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kyle Potter".

Kyle Potter, Ph.D., NCSP
Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association

SB126_MICUA_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Fidler, Sara

Position: FAV



Maryland Independent College
and University Association

Written Support

House Ways and Means Committee

Senate Bill 126 (Hester and Zucker) State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance

Sara C. Fidler, President

sfidler@micua.org

January 27, 2021

On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the 65,600 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of *Senate Bill 126 State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance*. This legislation would create a stakeholder advisory group to develop a reading and dyslexia handbook to guide local school systems in the implementation of best practices for early literacy and dyslexia. The completed handbook must be made available to the public and updated periodically.

Several MICUA member institutions have a teaching or education program that prepares K12 educators. As such, we take great interest in the work of the stakeholder advisory group being established under this bill. As an example, Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU), is dedicated to preparing teaching professionals through a graduate program. NDMU offers a new graduate Dyslexia Certificate Program in partnership with Jemicy School, nationally known for educating students with dyslexia and other related language-based learning disabilities. Participants who have completed the 12-credit program are prepared for the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) certification exam. As referenced in NDMU's testimony, the College is committed to supporting the implementation of SB 126 by recommending a faculty member with expertise in early literacy and dyslexia for appointment on the stakeholder advisory group.

For all of these reasons, MICUA requests a favorable Committee report for Senate Bill 126.



NOTRE DAME
OF MARYLAND
UNIVERSITY

Bill Number: SB126

Position: Letter of Support

Bill Title: State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and Assistance

Committee(s): Ways and Means / Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Bill Hearing Date(s): January 20 & 27, 2021

In May 2015, the Maryland General Assembly authorized a Task Force to Study the Implementation of a Dyslexia Education Program (HB278, 2015). The final report of the Task Force (2016)¹ stated that “*across the State, many teachers report limited knowledge regarding dyslexia and practices that produce results for this population of learners*” and recommended that curriculum and instructional strategies utilized in teacher preparation programs be reviewed and revised to include Structured Literacy and targeted evidenced-based intervention practices. In response to the report’s findings, starting in spring 2018, Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU) began offering a new graduate Dyslexia Certificate Program in partnership with Jemicy School, nationally known for educating for students with dyslexia and other related language-based learning disabilities. This twelve-credit program, which also addresses dysgraphia and dyscalculia, aligns with the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading developed by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). Upon completion, the candidates are prepared to take the IDA certification exam for classroom educators. The program has now expanded to include teacher cohorts in several large school districts in Maryland and incorporated as a master’s program concentration area.

NDMU supports SB126. Our work with teachers throughout Maryland shows that there is an ongoing need for them to have access to current resources and evidence-based practices related to early literacy and dyslexia. The proposed handbook, coupled with professional development, would provide classroom teachers with the knowledge and skills to instruct the struggling readers more effectively in their classrooms. NDMU would be willing to recommend and support a NDMU faculty member with expertise in early literacy and dyslexia be considered for appointment to the advisory group.

NDMU requests the committee return a favorable report on Senate Bill 126.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Greg FitzGerald, Chief of Staff, at (410) 532-5109 or gfitzgerald@ndm.edu, or Dr. Kathryn Doherty, Dean of the School of Education, at (410) 532-4597 or kdoherly1@ndm.edu.

KD:gf

¹ <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/021600/021654/20170046e.pdf>

Senate Bill 126 Testimony- Nicole Gable, MD.pdf

Uploaded by: Gable, Nicole

Position: FAV

Nicole Gable, MD, FAAP
Catonsville Primary Care Center
405 Frederick Road, Suite 210
Catonsville, Maryland 21228
Phone: 410-788-6565

Senate Bill 126: State Department of Education- Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices- Guidelines and Assistance

January 24, 2021

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee:

As a practicing pediatrician in the community for over 13 years, I have extensive experience caring for patients in times of academic struggle or failure. Parents feeling lost often turn to their pediatrician for help and hope. Many of these children have language disorders which are unidentified, misdiagnosed or misunderstood.

The Maryland General Assembly passed the Ready to Read bill in 2019, which initiated screening protocols for early literacy difficulties in young students. I support Senate Bill 126, a follow-up to the Ready to Read bill, requiring the Maryland State Department of Education to establish a stakeholder advisory group charged with developing a reading and dyslexia handbook. The reading and dyslexia handbook would provide consistent and current best practices on reading screening, instruction, and interventions. The reading and dyslexia handbook would be available to students, parents, teachers and the public.

I have the privilege of helping patients and parents untangle the web of their academic hardship. Some parents have been told their child struggles with reading or has a reading disorder, yet the word dyslexia has not been used. Others are certain their child is having difficulty learning but they do not know why. We spend significant amounts of time recalling important milestones in their educational and developmental history. An often-difficult conversation follows when we discuss how they have or have not been able to compensate for the skills they lack. We trudge forward, reaching out to educators, administrators, requesting testing through school. Families, those who can afford it, many times spend a considerable sum of money for private testing after being declined by their home school. With a diagnosis made, families again meet with teachers and administrators, hoping to have an IEP approved, yet still unsure which accommodations will be helpful. Without a definitive resource on reading and dyslexia practices, educators are often unsure as well.

Figuring out if children suffer from ADHD, anxiety or learning disabilities in the classroom through observation is a difficult task, particularly when teachers have not been trained to spot the signs of dyslexia. Even for teachers with many years' experience, the behavior resulting from these struggles is so similar they can overlap and be difficult to distinguish. There is a considerable number of children with ADHD who also suffer from dyslexia. In many of those children, their diagnosis of dyslexia has not been discovered, or they have been misdiagnosed as only having ADHD. You can see how this gets confusing.

Furthermore, we have been facing the COVID-19 pandemic for the past 10 months. As I write this testimony, most children in our state have not attended school in person for 317 days. I live in Howard County and have 3 children in elementary school, grades K, 3rd, and 5th. I can attest to the hardships associated with trying to conduct virtual school while working. We are fortunate to have the financial resources needed to supply added support for our children, even then, they are struggling. For families with a lack of resources, large sacrifices have been made at the workplace or in their child's education to be able to make it through each day. I am saddened by the loss families have had to endure because of school closures.

During this time of virtual learning, supplying IEP services to those students with an identified reading disability has been difficult and delayed. In addition, noticing students struggling with reading via a computer screen is a daunting task for teachers. When we emerge from this pandemic, there will invariably be learning loss throughout our school system. The reading and dyslexia handbook will support all struggling readers, whether they have fallen behind due to a learning disability or due to challenging learning circumstances during the pandemic.

Parents and teachers have not been given the resources to understand the signs of dyslexia, the impact dyslexia has on learning or how to implement changes at home and in the classroom. We are at a juncture where these resources and a new system of identifying struggling readers is crucial. Education is the most powerful force for change. The reading and dyslexia handbook supplies a low cost, universally available resource for the education that we desperately need at all levels of our school system. The reading and dyslexia handbook will move us toward success for all readers and specifically children with dyslexia, a highly intelligent group of learners.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole J. Gable, MD, FAAP
Pediatrician, Catonsville Primary Care Center

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Uploaded by: Getsinger, Elizabeth

Position: FAV

January 25, 2021

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook of 2021

Dear Representative,

I'm a teacher at Jemicy, which is a school in Baltimore County that teaches students with dyslexia. We get new students every year from all around the state. The students here are so bright and capable. They just couldn't learn at their previous schools because they learn in a different way. They tell me stories of how they felt inferior, because they couldn't keep up with their peers, how they faced confusion at every turn, how they felt embarrassed when they were called upon and didn't know the answers. They tell me stories of caring teachers who tried to help them, but also stories of too many teachers who just didn't understand. They tell me about friends they miss, but also nightmares of getting bullied and called dumb. Most of them come to us pretty battered. Many have low self-esteem, are fearful, and sometimes act out. It takes about a year at Jemicy for them to feel safe again. They start to love learning and begin to become what they were always meant to be, beautiful happy people who make this world a better place to be in.

One of those amazing people is my student, Alex Murphy. He is trying to get the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation passed. This legislation will help other teachers learn best practices for teaching students with dyslexia. That way no more children will have to go through what he and countless others have gone through. My students and I want to help, so we're sharing our testimonies with you. Thank you so much for taking the time to read our stories and for helping to carve a brighter path for children with dyslexia.

With Gratitude,
Liz Getsinger
Jemicy School Teacher



Dear Representative,

My name is Blake and

I am 8 years old.

Before Jemicy, it was hard

If I felt sick, it was impossible to read.

It was not a way for me to learn

At Jemicy, everyone

teaching me well for reading

Please help teachers learn!

From, Blake





Dear Representative,

My name is Jenny and

I am 8 years old.

Before Jemicy, it was

really hard I didn't know

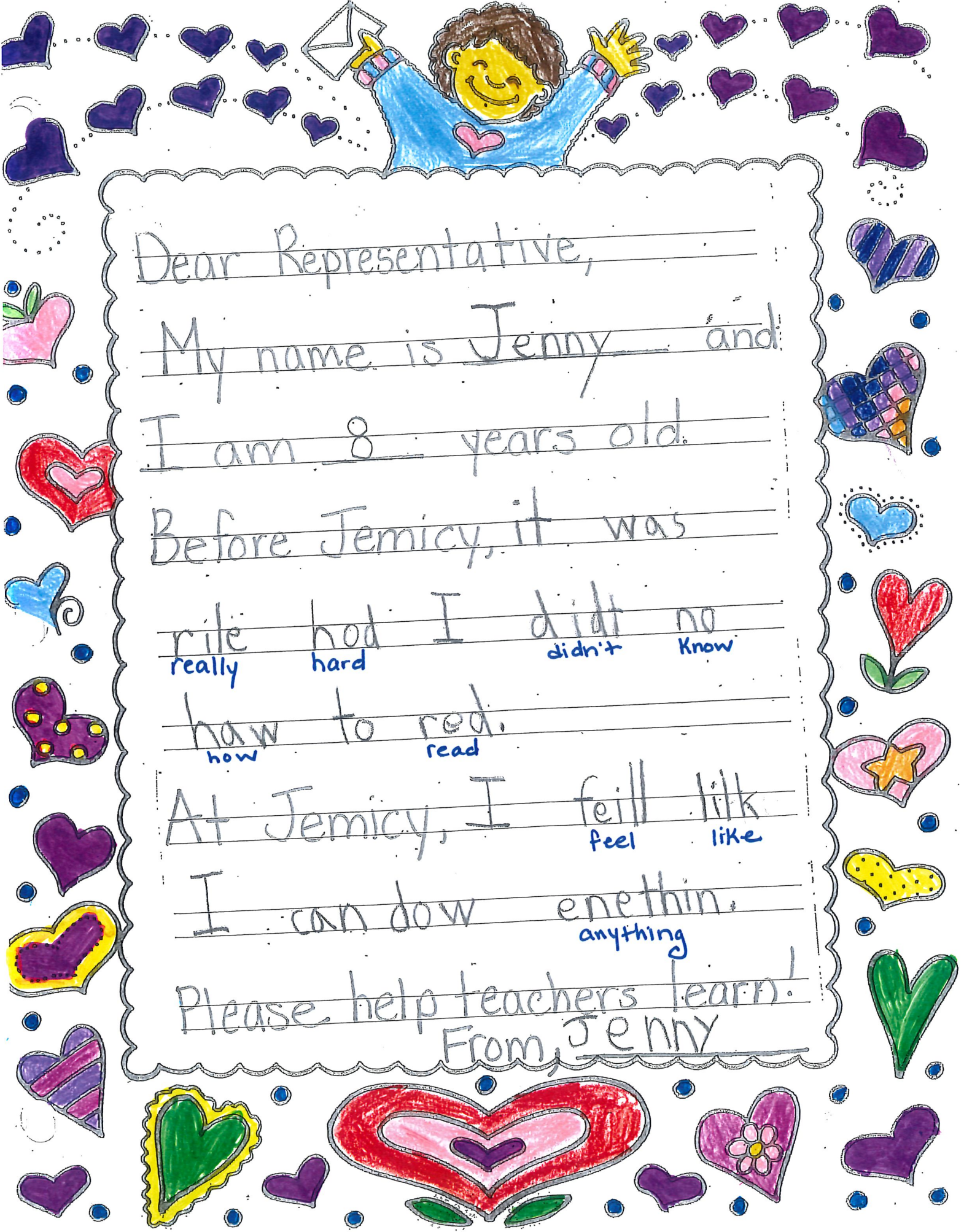
how to read.

At Jemicy, I feel like

I can do anything.

Please help teachers learn!

From, Jenny





Dear Representative,

My name is Gretchen and

I am 9 years old.

Before Jemicy, Reding was

hard for me.

At Jemicy, I feel cards.

Please help teachers learn!
From, Gretchen





Dear Representative,

My name is Millie and

I am 8 years old.

Before Jemicy, I ~~could~~
couldn't

~~sawd~~ ~~awt~~ ~~wrs.~~
sound out words

At Jemicy, I ~~red~~ ~~vake~~
read very

~~stole.~~
slow

Please help teachers learn!
From, Millie





Dear Representative,

My name is William and

I am 7 years old.

Before Jemicy, I couldn't

learn

At Jemicy, I can learn

power words

Please help teachers learn!

From, William





Dear Representative,

My name is Penny and

I am 7 years old.

Before Jemicy, it was hard to

read.
read

At Jemicy, I sound it out.

Please help teachers learn!

From, Penny





Dear Representative,

My name is Spencer and

I am 7 years old.

Before Jemicy, I had

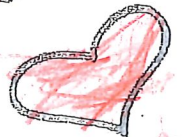
trouble reading

At Jemicy, I learned how to

learn new words

Please help teachers learn!

From, Spencer





Dear Representative,

My name is Yoni and

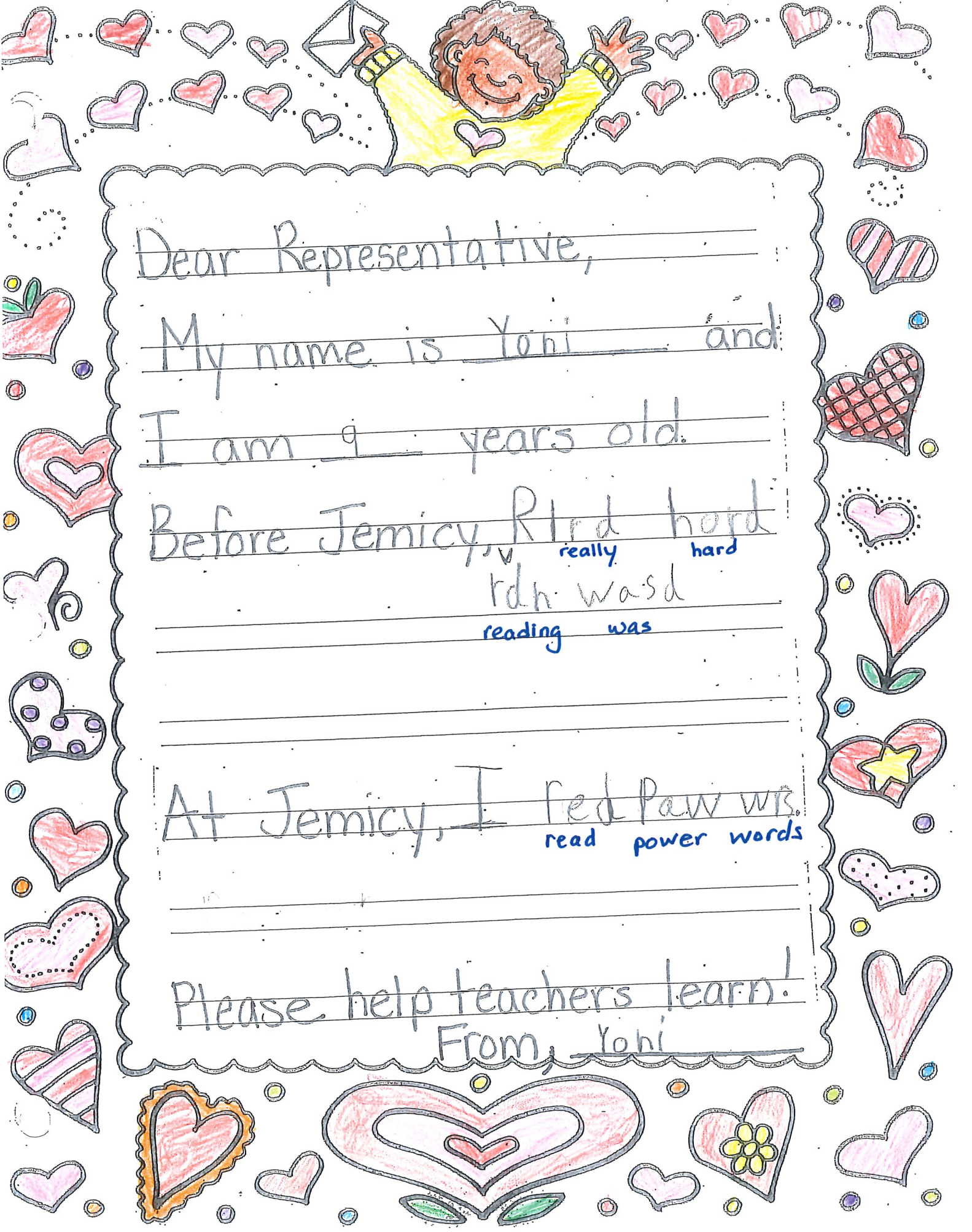
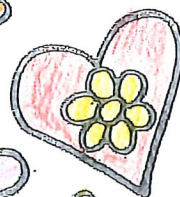
I am 9 years old.

Before Jemicy, I ^{really} ^{hard} ~~rdn~~ ^{reading} ^{was} ~~wasd~~

At Jemicy, I ^{read} ^{power} ^{words} ~~red~~ ~~paw~~ ~~wr.~~

Please help teachers learn!

From, Yoni





Dear Representative,

My name is Blake and

I am 8 years old.

Before Jemicy, it was hard

If I felt sick, it was impossible to read.

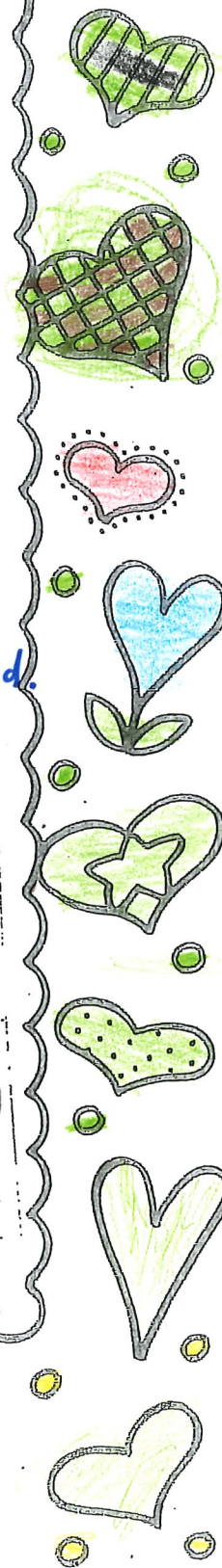
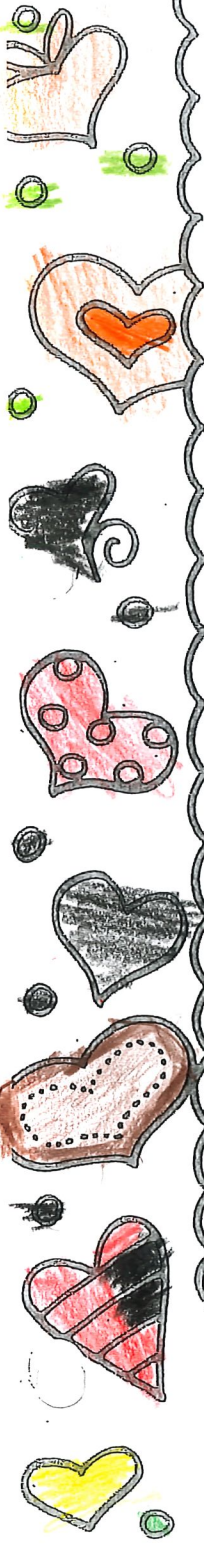
It was not a way for me to learn.

At Jemicy, everyone

teaching me well for reading

Please help teachers learn!

From, Blake



2.pdf

Uploaded by: Getsinger, Elizabeth

Position: FAV



Dear Representative,

My name is Jenny and

I am 8 years old.

Before Jemicy, it was

rite had I didnt no
really hard didn't know

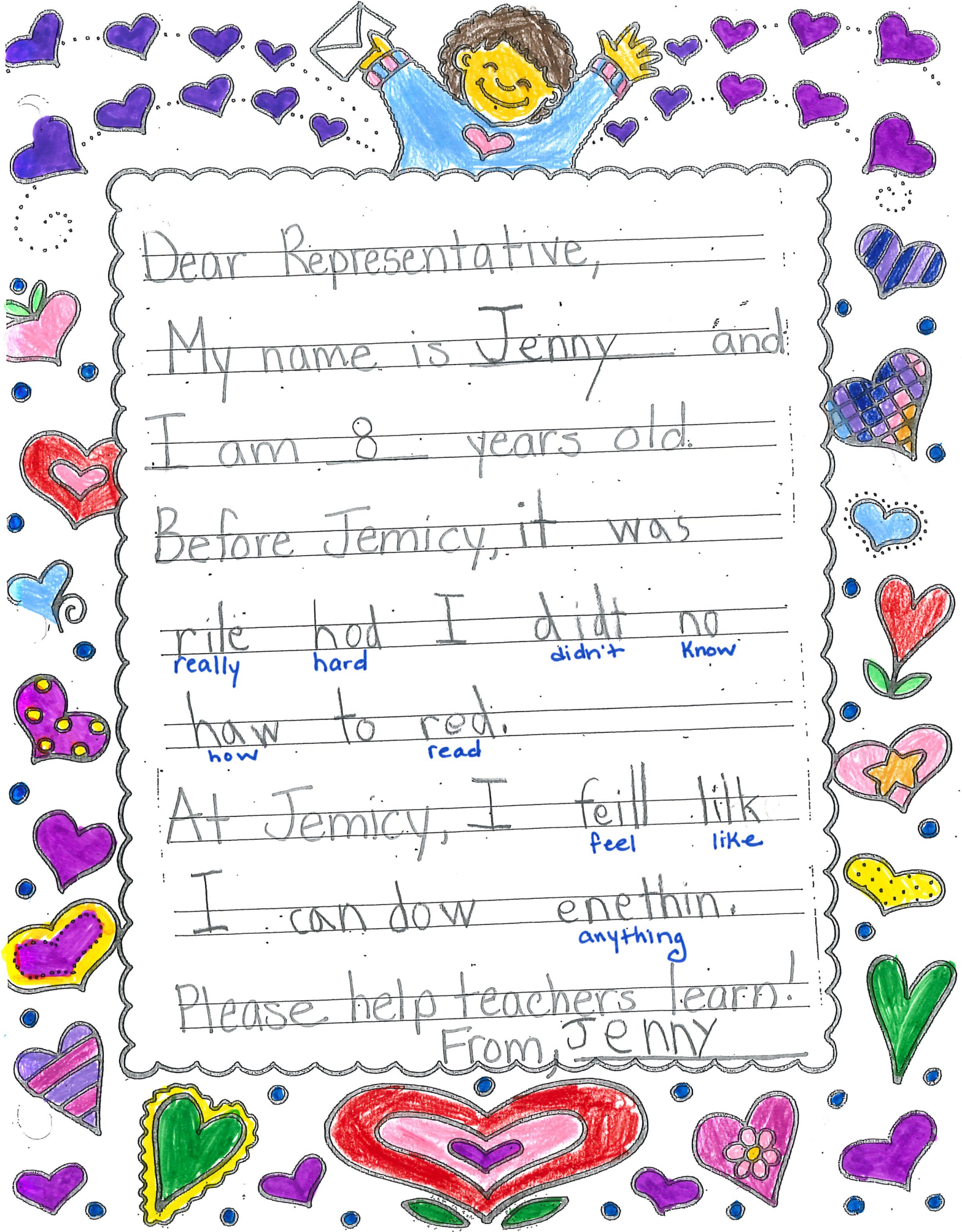
haw to red.
how read

At Jemicy, I feill lik
feel like

I can dow enethin.
anything

Please help teachers learn!

From, Jenny





Dear Representative,

My name is Gretchen and

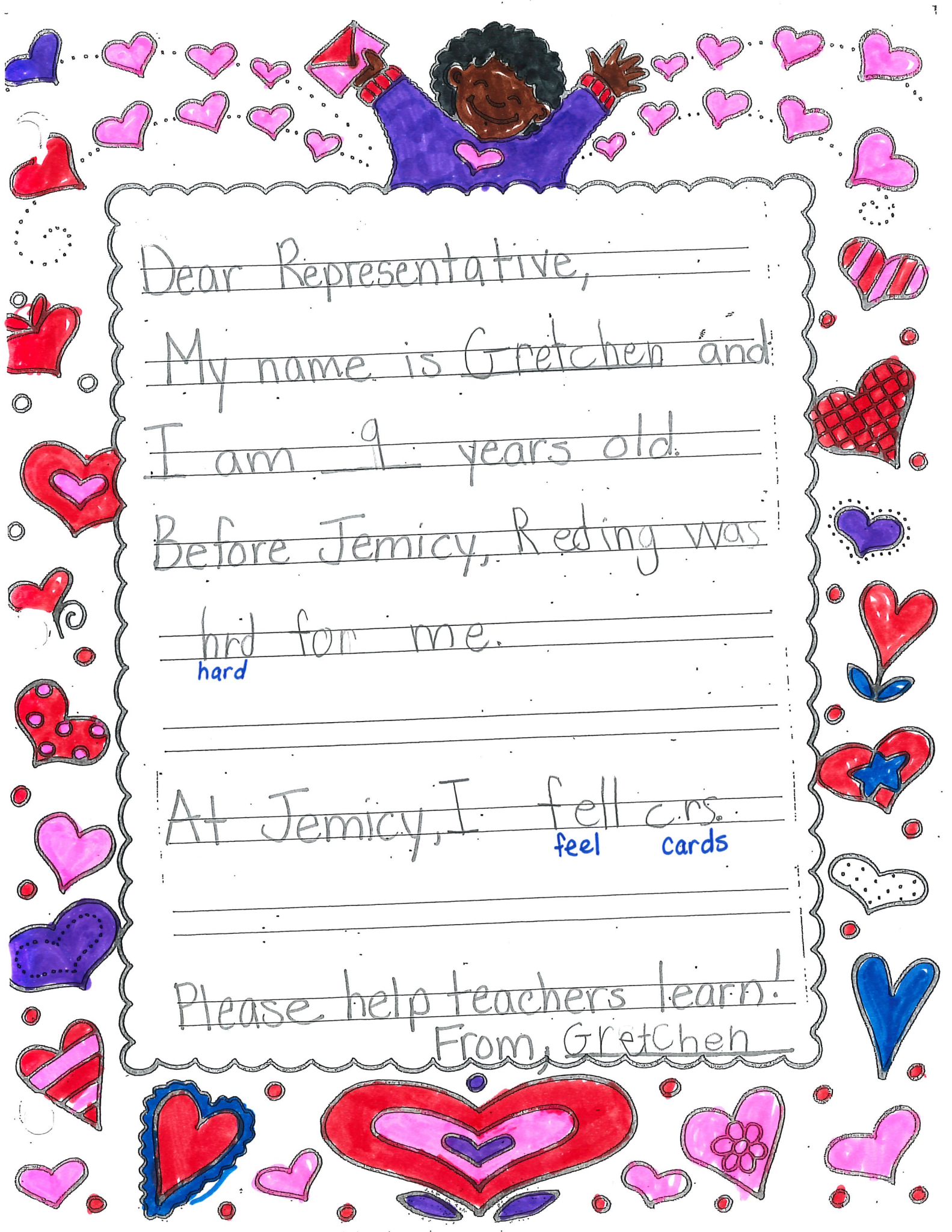
I am 9 years old.

Before Jemicy, Reding was

hrd for me.
hard

At Jemicy, I fell crs.
feel cards

Please help teachers learn!
From, Gretchen





Dear Representative,

My name is Millie and

I am 8 years old.

Before Jemicy, I ~~codit~~
couldn't

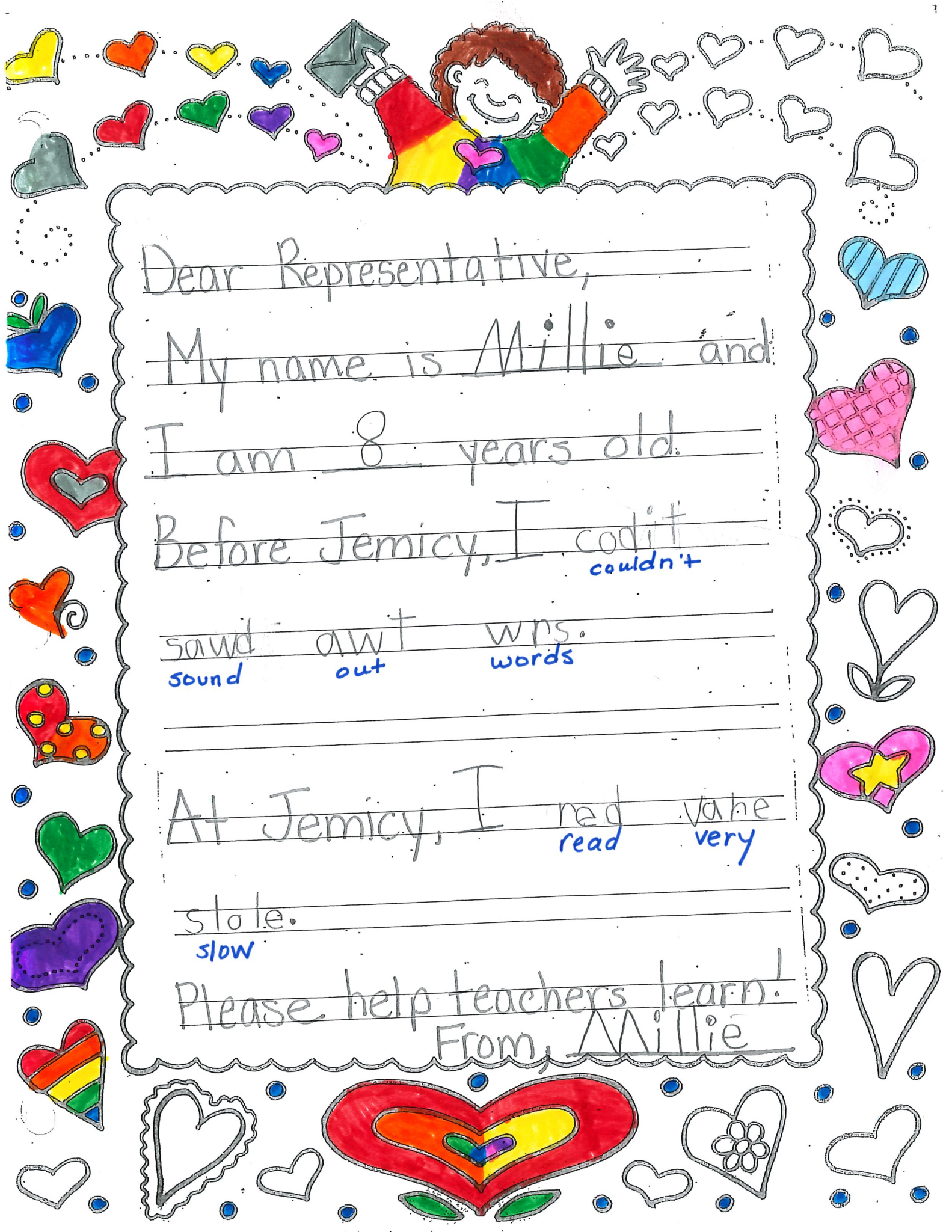
~~sawd~~ ~~awt~~ ~~wps.~~
sound out words

At Jemicy, I ~~red~~ ~~vah~~
read very

~~stole.~~
slow

Please help teachers learn!

From, Millie





Dear Representative,

My name is William and

I am 7 years old.

Before Jemicy, I ~~couldn't~~
couldn't

I ~~can't~~
learn

At Jemicy, I ~~can't~~
can learn

power words
power words

Please help teachers learn!

From, William





Dear Representative,

My name is Penny and

I am 7 years old.

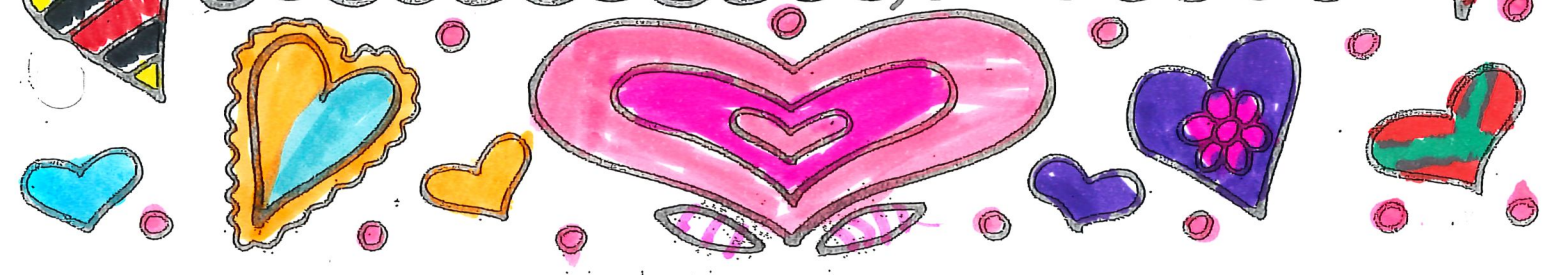
Before Jemicy, it was ~~hd~~to
hard


~~read~~
read

At Jemicy, I ~~sd~~ it aot.
sound out

Please help teachers learn!

From, Penny





Dear Representative,

My name is Spencer and

I am 7 years old.

Before Jemicy, I had

trouble reading

At Jemicy, I learned to

learn new words

Please help teachers learn!

From, Spencer





Dear Representative,

My name is Yoni and

I am 9 years old.

Before Jemicy, Rld hrd

really hard
rdn was
reading was

At Jemicy, I red Paw wr.

read power words

Please help teachers learn!

From, Yoni



January

19, 2021

Delegate: Kathy Szeliga
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Support for the Reading and
Dyslexia Handbook of 2021

Dear Senator or Delegate Szeliga,
I am writing to ask that you support
the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook
legislation SB 126 and HB 0237.

Sponsored by senator Katie Fry
Hester and Delegate Eric

Ebersole. Hi my name is Eileen I

hope you guys help us. A
lot of kids can not come here

because my school is very expensive
and when I went to my old
school I would get pulled out of
other classes and get teased

two different things and get questioned:
"Why do you get pulled? What is Dyslexia?"

And people would not hang out
with me but my best friend
helped me and I helped her
but sadly we lost contact and
I moved.

But this is my story. Thank you for
your time.

Sincerely, Eileen Windham. ♥

January, 19 2021

Delegate Nino

Mangione

Maryland General Assembly

Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the

Reading and Dyslexia

Handbook of 2021

Dear Delegate: Mangione

I am writing to ask that

you support the Reading

and Dyslexia Handbook

legislation, SB 126 +

HB 0237 sponsored by

January 19, 2021
Senator Shelly Hettleman

Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook of 2021

Dear Senator Hettleman I am writing to ask that you support the reading and dyslexia handbook legislation, SB 126 & HB 0237 sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

This is my story for years I was in a school that I could not stand. I got bullied and I couldn't understand anything they taught me. And every day I would dread to go to school. Then after finding schools we found Jernicy. And every morning I'm happy to go to Jernicy to see all my friends. You see I have Dyslexia and at my old school they didn't know how to teach me. And I would like there to be a Dyslexia handbook so other teachers can teach other dyslexic kids to help them learn.

From: Florence Frank

To: Senator Shelly Hettleman

3.pdf

Uploaded by: Getsinger, Elizabeth

Position: FAV

January 19

Senator Guy Guzzone
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook of 2021

Dear Senator Guy Guzzone,

I am writing to ask that you support the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation, SB 126 & HB 0237, sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole. I had a hard time in kindergarten and my younger brother was doing multiplication and division and was reading chapter books. And me, I couldn't even read a chapter book or do anything like my brother and it got worse in first grade because I wasn't behaving. So I went to St. Lukes and on my first day, I got bullied but I learned to ignore it. I didn't know I had dyslexia but I did, so I went to jemicy. Then I learned how to do words stuff. But I did know how to do paragraphs so i had to learn stuff that i new already so anyways I have a hard time thinking about what I type on the computer. Can you please pass the bill, so that other kids with dyslexia can learn? Please.

Sincerely, Andrew Baik

January 20, 2021
Senator Nino Mangione
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook of
2021

Dear Senator Mangione:

I am writing to ask that you support the Reading and
Dyslexia Handbook legislation, [SB 126 & HB 0237](#),
sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and
Delegate Eric Ebersole.

Nino Mangione, my story is rough. It started when i
was in pre-K. i have a lot of trouble with reading and
people would make fun of me. In kindergarten i got a
little better at reading. It was still super hard. I felt
like the words were moving. In first grade, I could
not read anything. It was still really hard. I had a
tutor that helped me, but it was still not enough
help. In second grade, it was still hard. My mom and
dad tried to get me in a school but the school would
not let me out of the school. It was hard. In fourth

grade i was still struggling. I could not do anything but I still had my tutor but I feel like I still needed more help. In fifth grade that's when i went in to jemicy. It was a relief. I felt so much better. My reading is so much better, the school is great. It was an awesome move.

I think you should make a handbook for dyslexic people, so people don't have to go through what I went through. Please do so.

Sincerely,

Oliver Harris

January 19, 2021

Delegate Jon Cardin
Maryland General Assembly Annapolis,
MD 21401

Re: Support for the reading and
Dyslexia handbook 2021

Dear Delegate Cardin I am
writing to ask that you support
the reading and Dyslexia handbook
legislation, SB 126 + HB 0237,
sponsored by senator Katie
Fry Hester and Delegate
Eric Ebersole,

I have Dyslexia. At my old
School^{school} which was Public School^{school}
it was rough. Most of the
days riding home from School^{school}
I was crying. In fourth grade, I
had to switch classes to another
class ^{because} the first one
was not a good fit. During
math I always felt dumb. For
almost 2 hours of my day I
was in a small group
that I was not a right
fit in. I always felt 'pushed

January 19, 2021

Delegate Courtney Watson
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook of 2021

Dear Delegate Watson,

I am writing to ask that you support the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation SB 126 & HB 0237, sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

I have Dyslexia and ADHD. I used to go to Centennial Lane Elementary School. When I was there, I got bullied by kids and teachers. It got so bad that I started to pretend to read. But now that I'm at Jemicy I'm doing way way better. I hope you approve the bill.

Sincerely,
Garin Miller

January 20, 2021
Senator Chris West
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook of 2021

Dear Senator West:

I am writing to ask that you support the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation, SB 126 & HB 0237, sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole. I have dyslexia. When I went to public school it was really hard for me. The classes were really big. The teachers hardly called on me. They did not know how to teach me. They thought I was done. A lot of Kids are bullies there.

When I went to Jemicy it was so different. The teachers call on me. They Know how to teach me. When I was at public school they didn't know how to teach dyslexia. You should make the hand book so the kids with dyslexia do not have a hard time like **I** did.

Sincerely, Brennan Harris

January 19, 2021

Senator Nina Mansione
Maryland General Assembly Annapolis, Md
21401
Re: Support for the reading and dyslexia
handbook

Dear Senator Mansione,

I'm writing to ask that you support
the reading and dyslexia handbook
legislation, SB 106 & HB 0237, sponsored
by Senator Katie Fry Hester and
Delegate Eric Ebersole. I have
dyslexia and I've had to switch
schools twice and none of
them have helped me. I was bullied
by kids and teachers. They
both called me dumb. And then
expected me to learn when I
told them I could not. They
wouldn't listen and kept me
down. Luckily I found a school
that I feel safe to answer
questions and can now read
the best in my grade. I do not
want any one to go through
what I went through. Sincerely, Sam Schu

January 19, 2021

Senator Chris West
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis MD 21401

Re support for the Reading and Dyslexia
handbook of 2021

Dear Senator West,
I am writing to ask that you support
the Reading and Dyslexia handbook
legislation SB 126 + HB 0237 sponsored by Senator
Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

I have Dyslexia and I am at Jemicy and at
my old school it was a struggle I could not do
anything the math was hard everything was hard
but at Jemicy it was so overall
Jemicy is a lot better. Sincerely

T. G. Bailey

January 19, 2021

Senator Deborah Kelly
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SUPPORT FOR THE READING
AND DYSLLEXIA HANDBOOK
2021

Dear Senator Kelly,

I am writing to
ask that you support
the Reading and Dyslexia
Handbook legislation,
SB 126 + HB 0227, sponsored
by Senator Kati Fry Hester
and Delegate Eric DeRosier.
I have dysgraphia
but I know people who have
dyslexia and I have heard stories
of kids being bullied
and not taught right.
Please pass the handbook
so this does not keep happening,

Sincerely, Donovan
SACUSTE

January, 19, 2021
Delegate Michele Guyton
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the reading and
Dyslexia hand book of 2021

Dear Delegate Guyton

I am writing to ask that you support
the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook
legislation, SB 126 + HB 0237 by Senator
Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric
Ebersole.

I have Dyslexia, Dysgraphia and Dyscalculia.
I used to go to Mays Chapel Elementary
School. It was pretty good but some things
I did not like as getting pulled out of
class for phonics and math but it was a little
sad because I missed science and other things.
And I wish my teacher had a hand book.

Sincerely,
Peyton Polite

January 19, 2021

Delegate Courtney
Watson
Maryland General
Assembly Annapolis,
MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading + Dyslexia Handbook of
2021

Dear Delegate Watson,

I am writing to ask you to support the Reading
and Dyslexia Handbook legislation SB 126 + HB 0237.

I have dyslexia and I went to
Greenleaf Country School. I was
2 reading levels behind everyone
else. If my teacher had the
handbook, I would be the same
reading level as everyone
else.

Sincerely,

Andrew Dugas

January 19, 2021
Senator Shelly Hetteleman
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the reading and dyslexia
handbook of 2021

Dear Senator Shelly Hetteleman

I am writing to ask that you support the reading
and dyslexia handbook legislation, SB 126 & HB 0237,
sponsored by Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole

My name is Shai Ashman and I have dyslexia.
My friends have told me about how sad and tragic their
life was before they went to jemicy. They have got bullied
and got it really hard because the teachers did not know
how to teach them. I think this handbook would help million
of kids learn and not get left behind so please make
this handbook to help kids get a good education

Sincerely,
Shai Ashman

4.pdf

Uploaded by: Getsinger, Elizabeth

Position: FAV

January 19, 2021

Delegate Lisa Belcastro
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia
Handbook of 2021

Dear Delegate Belcastro:

I am writing to ask that you support the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation, SB 126 and 0237, sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

Hi I am 11 years old and I would like to tell you my story. I was born in NYC and moved to Maryland for my dad's job. I went to Pretty Boy. The first year that I went there I got bullied because I was Asian. The second year I was there I got bullied and pulled out of one of the classes. I felt mad, sad, and dumb because I was pulled out of something I could do. They were not allowed to use the term dyslexic. So they just let me struggle. For the whole time I was there I got bullied.

The teachers made me feel less than and did not help me. They just gave me a calculator for math. My family and me found out my brother and sister and me all had dyslexia. We all got in to jemicy but some kids can't afford jemicy. I would like you to make the hand book so kids my age, older or younger don't have to go through what I had to.

Sincerely,

Beatrice Chan Sweenie

January 19, 2021

Delegate Trent Kittleman
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the reading and Dyslexia
Handbook of 2021

Dear Delegate Kittleman,

I am writing to ask that you support
the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook
legislation, SB 126 & HB 0237 sponsored
by Senator Katie Fry Hester and
Delegate Eric Ebersole.

My name is Abbey Lancelotta I
went to Resurrection St. Paul.

I would never get what they
taught me and I had to get
pulled out to be with my tutor
I was all ways so upset
because I did not get
my homework and I always
would get so frustrated And
my teacher got frustrated that

I did not get anything they
taught me. I also thought I was
so dumb and stupid. But when I
went to Jemiciy and it was
easier for me to read and
write and I was so much happier.
You should pass the book so
that teachers can help those
struggling kids.

Sincerely,
Abbey Lancia

Chance Falcone

January 19, 2021

Eric G. Luedtke

Maryland General Assembly


Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia

Dear Delegate Luedtke

I am writing to ask that you support the reading and Dyslexia handbook legislation, SB 126 & HB 0237, sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

I was always in a private school but they did not give me the help that I needed. When it was reading time, I would sit in the bathroom and wait in till the bell rang. I did not want to go to school because they would not teach me the right way. I have Dyslexia and it has been so much easier for me to read and write at Jemicy. Please help make the book so other people can



learn to read too. Sincerely, chance

Delegate Adrienne Jones
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Support for the
reading and Dyslexia
handbook of 2021

Dear Delegate Jones
I am writing to ask
if you support the
reading and Dyslexia
handbook legislation
SB 126 + HB 0237



sponsored by Senator
Katie Fry Hester and
Delegate Eric Ebersole.

I have Dyslexia. At
my old school I had
to have a lot of
tutors but now
I go to Jemicy. It
is so much easier. Please
pass the hand book
to help pack kids like me.
from Zack Kessler

January 19, 2021
Senator Robert Cassilly
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolios, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia
Handbook of 2021

Dear Senator Robert Cassilly

I am writing to ask that you
support the Reading and Dyslexia
Handbook legislation, SB 1268 & HB 0237,
sponsored by Senator Kate Fry and
Delegate Eric Ebersole.

I have dyslexia and it is hard to
learn. At my old school the teachers didn't
really know what to do. I would always
get pulled out of class to get help on
something and every time it was my turn
to read in class out loud and I didn't
get a word right I would get made
fun of for it. Some of the kids were
really mean and not the sweetest except
for mybff. I know a lot of other

Reg. Ten. W.

SCHOOL WAS
IN BALTIMORE AND WE
LIVED IN CROWNSVILLE
AND BALTIMORE IS 20
MILES AWAY FROM CROWNS-
VILLE WE MOVED
TO BALTIMORE

BECAUSE MY MOM COULDN'T
STAND GOING FROM
CROWNSVILLE TO BALTIMORE
THEN I WENT TO JEMIC
I LOVED IT SO MUCH
I WAS LEARNING BETTER

AND I'M SO GLAD FULL
I'M AT THIS SCHOOL.
PLEASE PLOVE THE
HANDBOOK SO OTHER
KIDS CAN LEARN.

FROM WESLEY KINGS
TO SHELBY WETTERMAN

1000

9-

1/1/2020

Senator Shelly Hettlerman

many (and general
assembly) Annandis

Ad 2140 / Re: SUPPORT FOR

Reading and dyslexia

handbook of 2021

Dear Senator Hettlerman

I am writing to ask

that you support the
Reading and dyslexia

handbook legislation

Sb 126 and HB 0237
sponsored by Senator
Katie Fryhes and
delegate

Erk Ebersole

I went to Millersville

elementary school

I would know what they
were doing. They would
first teach me a new

Way for math, but
I didn't get it, so
I started failing
but they would
still give me "A's".

I was frustrated.

My mom didn't
realize that they
were dumping me
down until she was home
to work. She was starting
to understand that
I didn't get it.
The next day they gave
me a calculator for
all the problems.

They gave me it for
a whole year. We moved
because my father's sister's

Kids that have reading and writing disorders and I hope that they don't have to go through what I had to go through and if you don't wanna pass this Bill I will not forgive you I don't want other kids to suffer. Kids get bullied enough and we don't want to get bullied because of our disorders every single day! Some days I would stay home from school just so I wouldn't get bullied. So please help these kids and make this Bill into a law.

Sincerely,
Peyton Walters

Senator Katie Fry
Hester and Delegate
Eric Loberse. My story
of dyslexia. In first grade
I got dyslexia. It was
a reading problem.
I kept getting bully
by other kid and made
fun of. Then I got
Jemicy it help me
a lot with reading and
spelling. This is why
we need handbooks.

Sincerely,

Alex Bealefeld

January 19, 2021
Delegate Brooke E. Lierman
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for Reading and Dyslexia Handbooks
of 2021

Dear Delegate Lierman,

I am writing to ask that you support the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation, SB 126 & HB 0237, sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

My name is Bridget and I have dyslexia. When I was at my old school I always felt rushed. Another thing is it was hard and I always got pulled out of class at the fun times. On Thursdays when I got home I had to go straight to tutoring and I did not like it. When I moved to Jemisy I found reading easier. Another thing is when I go home I get to go play with my friends. I want all schools to be like Jemisy or something like it.

I hope you will help pass a
bill for a Reading and Dyslexia handbook.

Sincerely,
Bridget Desai

6.pdf

Uploaded by: Getsinger, Elizabeth

Position: FAV

January 19, 2021

Senator Guy Guzzone
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia
Handbook of 2021

Dear Senator Guy Guzzone,
I am writing to ask that you support
the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook
legislation, SB 126 and HB 0237, sponsored
by Senator Katie Fry Hester and
Delegate Eric Ebersole.

When I was in public school there
was not a lot of reading specialists.
Also, it took me twice as long
to take the standardized tests.
I have dyslexia so the teachers
at my old school did not know
how to teach me so I had to
move to this school called Jemicy
and Jemicy is amazing. And I think
that all schools should be
just like Jemicy so I'm asking
you to please help the bill
pass.

Seen

Sincerely, ALEX
MURPHY

2/10/21

January 19 2021

Senator Benjamin Brooks

Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis MD 21401

Re Support for the Reading
and Dyslexia handbook of 2021

Dear Brooks, I am writing
to ask that you support the
reading and dyslexia handbook
legislation sb 126 & hb 0237
sponsored by senator Katie Fry
Hester and delegate Eric
Ebersole. I have dyslexia and
most of the time it's hard
and I go through lots of
stuff and I don't want other
people to go through what I
have to and I want that
to change. Some teachers
don't know that some of
their students have dyslexia
and then they make it
a lot harder than it's supposed to be.

The handbook will
make teachers better
sincerely Rujin

January 19-21

date

Delegate Tony Bridges

Maryland General Assembly

Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for Reading and Dyslexia handbook of 2021

DEAR Delegate Tony Bridges,

I am writing to ask that you support the

Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation;

SB 126 & HB 0237, sponsored by Senator Katie

Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

^{mystery} I went to McDough a public school.

I couldn't pay attention and got in trouble a lot.

We had 10+'s of homework so I struggled a lot.


I had a lot of trouble in math and got in

trouble a lot. All the kids probably thought I was


a dum dum. I was really scared around kids at my


school. I was so scared I didn't tell my parents.

Then I was ^{tutored} in math. It was so ^{embarrassing} embarrassing.

I was scared so scared I didn't want to show my face. 

The only thing I was good at was art. Heck I drew

 everywhere. But I got in trouble for showing my

feelings. I even got yelled at in free time for drawing 

big eyes on my person. It changed me. I lost some ^{interest} interest.

 my mom and dad knew something was wrong. I felt

alone, isolated, like no one liked me. So I learned

I had Dyslexia so we were moving schools.

(Jemicy) the best school
EVER!

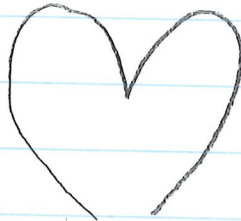
flip



This is why you should help
make a handbook.

Spencer Drummond

♥ (p.s.) (my friends are writing too) ♥





January 19 2021

Delegate Trent Kittleman
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia
Handbooks of 2021

Dear, Delegate Trent Kittleman

I am ^{writing} to ask that you support the
Reading and Dyslexia Handbooks legislation,
SB 126 & HB 0237, sponsored by Senator Katie
Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

Before I came to Jemicy I was being
bulleyed for having Dyslexia, and not finishing
my homework because it was very hard. Coming
to Jemicy I made friends and I lerned things.
I am wrighting to you. please help kids
who have Dyslexia. It's hard to learn with
Dyslexia. Some kids cant go to a Place
like Jemicy like my friend's Cousin get Beat
up because she had Dyslexia. poople get bulled
for things like that. Please help Children
learn better and actually make friends and
play together. Teachers here at Jemicy
are VERY nice, nicer then the teachers at my old school.

The teachers at my old school would be mad if I did not finish my homework. It would be really hard, so help kids like me with Dyslexia and help them learn better and have fun. Kids like me get bullied for having Dyslexia. Think about that for a sec, Being Bullied! Bullied, that is hart braking so help children learn better and actually make friends. This girl at my old school told all my friends (which was only 4) to ignore me for a long time and guess what HAPPENED? For a year they ignored me. Then I moved schools to Jemicy and BOOM I learned better and for once in my life I am not being bullied. I have a lot of friends like the whole grade because we all learn the same so Delegate Trent Kittleman please help kids like me with Dyslexia. We need help with this. Without your help these kids with Dyslexia will still be bullied and Bullies telling your friends to ignore you. Jemicy helped me read and write better. Please help. Plus now I can write a 7 page story I wrote one yesterday! Sincerely, Sloane Engel

January 19, 2021

delegate Jay Jalisi

Maryland General Assembly

Annapolis MD 21401

Re: support for the Reading and
Dyslexia Handbook of 2021

Dear Delegate Jalisi,

I am writing to ask that

you support the Reading and
Dyslexia handbook

legislation SB 26 + HB 023

sponsored by Senator Katie

Fry Hester and Delegate

Eric Ebersole.

I'm a kid with Dyslexia.

At my old school I

always felt like the

odd one out. All the other

kids didn't want to

play with me because

I was different and my

teachers were giving me

work that was too hard.

So I went to Jemicy

and that all changed!

and I want every kid

to experience that

experience

Sincerely,

Amey

7.pdf

Uploaded by: Getsinger, Elizabeth

Position: FAV

Logan West

January 19, 2021



Senator Mary Washington
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the Reading and Dyslexia
Handbook of 2021

Dear Senator Washington

I am writing to ask that you support the
Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation
SB 1264 HB 0237 sponsored by Senator Katie
Fry Hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

Hi my name is Logan and I just ^{want to} tell
you what I've been through. It all
started in 2nd grade. I just found out I had
dyslexia. I thought it was a disease and I was
scared. But then I found Jemicy and I got
better. I struggled a lot in public school
learning how to read. I don't wish that
struggle on any kid. It's really difficult to
handle and I'm so lucky to go to Jemicy
because without it I wouldn't be where I
am today. I hope you guys make this
a law so other kids don't have to go through
the struggle I went through. It's so painful.

Sincerely,
Logan West

To do things I didnt know
how to. I used to go to speach
and since I was always
sad or crying I went
to this person at my
School to help me feel
better. It didnt work
that well. After School
my math teacher was
helping me with homework
because I didnt understand
much in math. I had
a teacher come into
help with my classwork
if I needed it but
she would always
say I cant do
your work for you
but I just needed
help. Every since I have
been in jemicy I have
been happy and excited
to learn. I feel smart
and not pushed. Please
pass the bill so people dont have
to go through what I did.

Sincerely, Sunny Purolo

January 19, 2020 ^{lagan}


Senator Shielly Hettner
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the reading
and Dyslexia Handbook of
2021. I am writing

to ask that you support
the reading and Dyslexia
Handbook legislation, SB
126 and HB 0237,

sponsored by Senator Katie
Fry Hester and Delegate
Eric Ebersole.

Logan Battle

I don't have dyslexia
but I want to help
people with dyslexia because
it is nice. But I
think I have
dyscalculia I am
doing good in math
but it is still hard
for me. There's a lot
of people that I
want to help with
dyslexia. Sincerely,
Logan Battle 

January 19, 2021

Senator Shelly Hettleman
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Support for the Reading and
Dyslexia Hand book of 2021

Dear Senator Hettleman

I am writing to ask that

you support the reading and
dyslexia handbook legislation

SB 126 + HB 0237 sponsored by
Senator Katie Fry Hester and
Delegate Eric Ebersole.

I have dyslexia I got made
fun of at my old school, McDona
I got made fun of because I couldn't
read. All of my class mates
finished projects two days before me.
Kids called me stupid and that I
stink at reading so please make
a dyslexia hand book so kids don't have to get
made fun of

I am Sincerely from Beck long

January 19, 2021

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary

Maryland General Assembly

Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for the reading and Dyslexia handbook of 2021

Dear, Delegate Atterbeary

I'm writing to ask you to support the reading and dyslexia handbook legislation, SB 126 & HD 0237, Sponsored by Senator Katie Fry hester and Delegate Eric Ebersole

Hi, I'm madelyn hazlup. I have Dyslexia and I'm in 2th grade and I learned that I had Dyslexia in 3rd grade. And I had the worst time at ^{public} school. I got an Ipad to help me and the teacherz acted and ^{thought} ^{that} I was dumb

and The kidz thought I waz weird and always asked me in a mean tone why do you have that and at recess no one would play with me and ^{they would} run away. Later, I moved to a new school in 4th grade and It's called Jernicy and I love it! The only thing w'z that it's an hour and 10 minutes away to get the right education. And Mye freindz had problems like thiz too and one of them iz Kinergaten waz stapled to a locker b/ a 5th grader. Alex Murphy iz one of my best freindz and I really want thiz handbook bill. That way kidz like me won't go ^{through} what I went through and won't have to pay for my Dyslexia privet school like me. Please support the handbook to help all the kidz like me in maryland.

Your Hopeful Citizen,

Madelyn Hazlop!



Edward Gibson Handbook Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Gibson, Edward

Position: FAV

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

2201 Boxmere Rd
Lutherville MD, 21093

443-900-2796

eddie123gibson@gmail.com

In Support of Maryland Reading and Dyslexia Handbo

Uploaded by: Hankins, Laura

Position: FAV

January 25, 2021

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing to ask that you support the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook legislation [SB 126 & HB 0237](#) sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester and Sen. Craig Zucker in the Senate and sponsored by Delegate Eric Ebersole in the House.

I am the Reading Specialist at Gaithersburg Elementary in Montgomery County Public Schools. I have worked in this school for 20 years. Gaithersburg is a Title I school that serves a very special population of nearly 900 students. 80% of our students are Hispanic and speak Spanish at home. Most come from immigrant families. 15% of our families are black. Our school's demographics also include 80% FARMS and we have about 20% mobility. Many of our students have experienced interrupted education either because of housing instability, visits back to their home countries or from lack of access to education in the countries from which they came in Central America.

Gaithersburg has a unique Bilingual Biliteracy program in K-3. We began this program in kindergarten four years ago and plan to expand to fourth grade next year. This program was created in response to the research that children learn to read best in their native language. Our BB program serves native Spanish speakers. These students learn in classrooms in Spanish and English 50% of their instructional time in all content areas. We build their L1 and foundational skills, using the phonology they know best, while introducing English and teach them the same foundational skills in English.

Gaithersburg ES has been responding to the body of research called the Science of Reading since 2015. This initiative was driven by the leaders inside the school building who continue to study the research that supports the best way to develop literacy skills in all children. Each year, we provide more PD to the teachers and staff while implementing new programs that move us away from ineffective balanced literacy practices and move us more toward a code-emphasis curriculum.

Those who know the field know that early identification of dyslexia is powerful and has the best chance of remediation against reading failure. The population I serve at Gaithersburg is at great risk for being missed. All of our district assessments and screeners are in English. Most

of my kindergarten and first grade students fail these assessments and screeners, therefore masking any real red flags for dyslexia. These screeners measure a little phonemic awareness and a little phonics, but they do not truly screen for dyslexia. Most of the students with dyslexia in my building are not identified until the third-fifth grade, after years of intervention instruction, because too many exclusionary factors get in the way. Yes, my population of students come from backgrounds that challenge our assessment systems. Many don't speak English. Many have had interrupted instruction. Does that mean that they should wait until the fifth grade to be identified with dyslexia? We do our best to provide intervention instruction for many students every year who are not officially identified and we are trying very hard to provide Tier 1 instruction for all students that should keep more students away from reading failure. Marginalized populations like mine at GES, in schools that don't know the science, are struggling even more to obtain the recognition and instruction that they desperately need.

The Maryland Reading and Dyslexia Handbook is essential to streamline the process to identify all students at risk early enough to provide appropriate and science supported instruction. In the RS role at my school, I am working with my Special Education team to understand dyslexia, learn how to identify it (regardless of language) and write appropriate and effective IEPs goals. This is happening in my building because I have studied dyslexia and the Science of Reading on my own. My district is not providing guidance or education. Our psychologists and special education teachers are not being trained by the district. A handbook would educate districts and parents about what they can and should expect. A handbook will help ensure that IEPs for those with dyslexia are written and carried out effectively. A handbook would hold all schools accountable for the work that provides equitable literacy education for all students.

Early identification and early intervention is critical. The absence of both is malpractice. Tier 1 instruction that is responsive to the Science of Reading is also essential. Balanced Literacy is malpractice. A handbook will put all districts in Maryland on common ground with common goals and streamlined approaches to reducing reading failure for all students, early identification of dyslexia and the sound instructional approaches to teaching students with dyslexia. Professional development would be streamlined as well. Teacher knowledge and capacity is the most powerful tool our state has to fight this dismal illiteracy pandemic that is happening in our state and around the country.

Please support this handbook. Not every school has someone in it doing the study of Dyslexia and the Science of Reading on their own. For me, the work is even harder because the tools

provided to me by the district (PD, curriculum and assessment tools), are not aligned with the science. The state should be driving the work toward effective literacy instruction for all, early identification, along with appropriate and effective intervention instruction for students with dyslexia, dysgraphia and OWL LD. Teachers want to learn. They want to be effective. A handbook is a first step toward that goal.

Please support the adoption of this handbook. Maryland children need sound and consistent literacy programming. Maryland children with dyslexia need to be identified in K-1, regardless of their backgrounds. Maryland children with dyslexia deserve free and appropriate intervention instruction. All Maryland children deserve the chance to be literate citizens.

Thank you,

Laura Hankins

Literacy Specialist, M.Ed

MDGA_SenatorHester_FAV_SB126.pdf

Uploaded by: Hester, Katie

Position: FAV

KATIE FRY HESTER
Legislative District 9
Carroll and Howard Counties

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 304
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3671 • 301-858-3671
800-492-7122 Ext. 3671
KatieFry.Hester@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 27th, 2021

Sponsor Testimony in Favor of Senate 126 - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and Assistance

Position: Favorable

Chairman Pinsky, Vice chair Kagan, members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs committee:

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 126. Over the past several months, each and every one of us has heard from our constituents about the challenges our students have been facing in a primarily virtual environment. Just last week, we heard from local Superintendents around the State who described falling test scores and serious educational impacts of the learning loss caused by COVID-19. This is especially true for our students with early literacy challenges and dyslexia, for whom the impacts of this loss of instructional time only compound the pre-existing challenges they have faced and will continue to face over the course of their educational careers. While our parents and educators continue to search for answers on how to close the learning gap for some of our most vulnerable students, the State has an opportunity and responsibility to support those efforts through the end of the pandemic and into the future, to generate better lifelong outcomes for our children with early literacy difficulties and dyslexia.

This bill allows us to do just that, creating a stakeholder advisory group, including educators and members of the dyslexia community, to collaborate on the creation of a Reading and Dyslexia Handbook and a central repository of tools and materials that address the needs of at-risk and struggling readers and students with dyslexia. This would provide a set of powerful, evidence-based resources for parents, teachers, and local school systems working to ensure our children with dyslexia and early literacy challenges are successful throughout their educational careers. The Handbook would include:

1. Evidence-based best practices for reading screening, identification of reading difficulties, comprehensive literacy instruction, and other specifically designed instructions or interventions;
2. Definitions, indicators, and characteristics of reading difficulties, dyslexia, and dysgraphia;
3. Recommendations for student accommodations, including assistive technology, and methods of parent engagement and communication;

After development, the handbook would be disseminated through each local school system's social media sites, professional learning channels, and other modes of communication for parents and educators. Additionally, this legislation requires the Department of Education designate a dyslexia liaison within the Department to assist local school systems in implementing professional development opportunities and other forms of technical assistance, designed based on the contents of the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook. This bill was a recommendation of the Maryland Dyslexia Task Force in 2015. It also follows a model laid out by 23 other states, including Texas, California, and New Jersey, bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders to create a comprehensive resource on reading and dyslexia.

Research has shown that effective early intervention can be the key to closing the educational gaps experienced by children with dyslexia and reading difficulties. At a young age, the brain is highly plastic and will adapt to the right sets of training and practices - so much so that a 2014 meta-analysis showed that up to 70 percent of at-risk children who receive educational intervention in kindergarten or first grade went on to become entirely proficient readers. This bill will make sure that these best practices reach the hands of our parents and teachers, and are based on sound scientific evidence while simultaneously incorporating the real world experience of teachers and advocates who have spent countless hours of their professional and personal lives on this important issue. With this legislation, we have an opportunity to help our community members identify children with reading difficulties earlier in life, and implement more effective interventions following identification. **For those reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report for SB126.**

Sincerely,

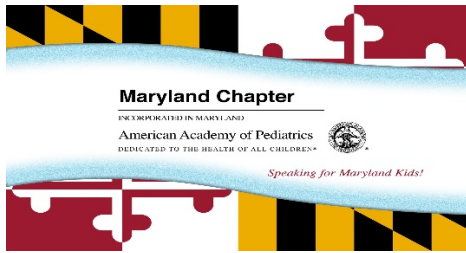


Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Carroll Counties

SB0126_FAV_MDAAP_Early Literacy & Dyslexia Practic

Uploaded by: Kasemeyer, Pam

Position: FAV



TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Members, Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Katie Fry Hester

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: January 27, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 126 – *State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance*

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 126.

The Maryland General Assembly passed the Ready to Read bill in 2019 (*see Senate Bill 734: Education – Students with Reading Difficulties – Screenings and Intervention*), which initiated screening protocols for early literacy difficulties in young students. Senate Bill 126 is a follow-up to the Ready to Read bill, requiring the Maryland State Department of Education to establish a stakeholder advisory group charged with developing a reading and dyslexia handbook. The reading and dyslexia handbook would provide consistent and current best practices on reading screening, instruction, and interventions. The reading and dyslexia handbook would be available to students, parents, teachers, and the public.

Without a definitive resource on reading and dyslexia practices, parents and educators are often unsure how to determine what is contributing to a student's challenges and/or how to best assist the student. Figuring out if children suffer from ADHD, anxiety, or learning disabilities in the classroom through observation is a difficult task, particularly when teachers have not been trained to spot the signs of dyslexia. Even for teachers with many years' experience, the behavior resulting from these struggles is so similar they can overlap and be difficult to distinguish. There is a considerable number of children with ADHD who also suffer from dyslexia. In many of those children, their diagnosis of dyslexia has not been discovered, or they have been misdiagnosed as only having ADHD.

Passage of Senate Bill 126 will ensure that there is a universally available resource for both parents and teachers. The reading and dyslexia handbook will support all struggling readers, whether they have fallen behind due to a learning disability or due to challenging learning circumstances during the pandemic. It will help improve educational outcomes for all readers and specifically children with dyslexia. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
410-244-7000

EACtestimony.SB126.pdf

Uploaded by: Margolis, Leslie

Position: FAV

Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities

SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

**SENATE BILL 126: STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – EARLY LITERACY AND DYSLEXIA PRACTICES –
GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE**

JANUARY 27, 2021

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of more than 30 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, supports Senate Bill 126. This bill would require MSDE to establish a stakeholder advisory group to develop a Reading and Dyslexia Handbook. The advisory group would use evidence-based best practices and processes for comprehensive literacy instruction as the starting point for the Handbook. The Handbook would also be consistent with the resources developed by MSDE to support the Ready to Read Act (2019).

Like 23 other states with reading and dyslexia handbooks, a Maryland handbook would provide teachers, administrators and parents with state-specific, consistent best practices for reading and dyslexia and would include best practice information on reading instruction, reading screening, reading interventions for students at risk and public access to information on MSDE's public website.

A majority of students with individualized education programs (IEPs) struggles with reading; reading goals are included on the IEPs of many of these students. Teachers, administrators, and parents need a definitive resource on reading practices and dyslexia practices that are easily located and accessible. Additionally, this bill would require MSDE to designate an existing employee as a dyslexia point-person. Teachers and school systems could call upon this person for suggestions and assistance on how best to work with students with dyslexia or reading difficulties.

For these reasons, the EAC supports Senate Bill 126. For more information, please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Chairperson, at 410-727-6352, ext. 2505 or at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Almazan, Selene Almazan Law, LLC
Rene Averitt-Sanzone, The Parents' Place of Maryland
Linda Barton, M.Ed., Education Consultant
Elizabeth Benevides, Howard County Autism Society
Michelle Davis, ABCs for Life Success

SarahRuth Davis, Parent Advocacy Consortium
Jennifer Engel Fisher, Weinfeld Education Group
Lisa Frank, Andrea Bennett and Jen Ritchotte, Special Kids Company
Ginger Hanson, Decoding Dyslexia Maryland
Kalman Hettleman, Independent Advocate
Rosemary Kitzinger and Marjorie Guldan, Bright Futures, LLC
Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland
Ellen O'Neill, Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center
Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism
Lori Scott, The Arc Maryland
Ronnetta Stanley, Loud Voices Together
Guy Stephens, Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint
Maureen van Stone, Mallory Finn Legg and Alyssa Thorn, Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute

EACtestimony.SB126.pdf

Uploaded by: Margolis, Leslie

Position: FAV

Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities

SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

**SENATE BILL 126: STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – EARLY LITERACY AND DYSLEXIA PRACTICES –
GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE**

JANUARY 27, 2021

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of more than 30 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, supports Senate Bill 126. This bill would require MSDE to establish a stakeholder advisory group to develop a Reading and Dyslexia Handbook. The advisory group would use evidence-based best practices and processes for comprehensive literacy instruction as the starting point for the Handbook. The Handbook would also be consistent with the resources developed by MSDE to support the Ready to Read Act (2019).

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For these reasons, the EAC supports Senate Bill 126. For more information, please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Chairperson, at 410-727-6352, ext. 2505 or at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Almazan, Selene Almazan Law, LLC
Rene Averitt-Sanzone, The Parents' Place of Maryland
Linda Barton, M.Ed., Education Consultant
Elizabeth Benevides, Howard County Autism Society
Michelle Davis, ABCs for Life Success

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Jennifer Engel Fisher, Weinfeld Education Group
Lisa Frank, Andrea Bennett and Jen Ritchotte, Special Kids Company
Ginger Hanson, Decoding Dyslexia Maryland
Kalman Hettleman, Independent Advocate
Rosemary Kitzinger and Marjorie Guldan, Bright Futures, LLC
Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland
Ellen O'Neill, Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center
Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism
Lori Scott, The Arc Maryland
Ronnetta Stanley, Loud Voices Together
Guy Stephens, Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint
Maureen van Stone, Mallory Finn Legg and Alyssa Thorn, Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute

McClenney-Rosenstein, Lauren Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: McClenney-Rosenstein, Lauren

Position: FAV

January 27, 2021

RE: HB 237/SB 126
Maryland House of Delegates
House Ways of Means Committee
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 237 / SB 126
MSDE- Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices- Guidance and Assistance

Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am urging you to support the Reading & Dyslexia Handbook bill being proposed this legislative session, HB 237 / SB 126. Five to 15%, or 14.5- 43.5 million Americans have been diagnosed with dyslexia and still may not be getting the free and appropriate public education they need to be successful socially, emotionally, and academically. Studies have shown that 80% of the prison inmates in Texas are functionally illiterate and 48% have dyslexia. There is still an unknown percentage of students and adults who have gone undiagnosed as well. The time is now for school districts to have properly trained teachers to identify, teach, and accommodate students with dyslexia. Reading and writing are civil rights, and all students should be allowed the opportunity for success.

I have been a special educator for a decade, and I began my career at a private dyslexia school in the suburbs of Atlanta as an elementary educator. I was trained under an Orton-Gillingham Fellow and am endorsed at the Associate level through the Orton-Gillingham Academy. I also worked at the Lab School of Washington which services students with language-based learning differences and I've seen how defeated kids are when they leave the public school system to enter a place that knows how to support their needs. I also spent four years in Howard County Public schools at the secondary level. By the time students reach their secondary years, behavior problems begin to arise. Teachers are not properly equipped to troubleshoot or get to the root of the cause due to lack of knowledge and training. At this point, students have fallen out of love with school and the work becomes impossible in their eyes and the negative cycle of student failure continues.

I advocate for dyslexia in my personal time on various social media platforms bringing global awareness to this critical issue. I have seen students thrive first-hand when they receive the appropriate approach and instruction to support their needs; they're truly able to unlock their potential. As I stated before, reading and writing are critical life skills and the cornerstone to education. By taking away the ability to read, students may turn to unfavorable hobbies that don't deem them productive citizens in society. More specifically, as an educator of color, I worry about the BIPOC community and their ability to receive an equal opportunity as their white counterparts.

Passing HB 237 / SB 126 will be life changing for so many students, families, and the state of Maryland's education system. Please return a favorable report and move forward with HB 237 / SB 126 so MSDE will be tasked with working with stakeholders to create a handbook that will help school systems to better identify and provide services to all children with dyslexia across the entire state of Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Dr. Lauren McClenney-Rosenstein
8547 Wheatfield Way
Ellicott City, MD 21043
(443)878-6022 | dr Lauren@thinkdyslexia.org

2021 01 27 - Alex Murphy - Senate Written Testimon

Uploaded by: Murphy, Alex

Position: FAV

Hello Honorable Members of the Maryland State Senate,

My name is Alex Murphy and I am in fifth grade. I have dyslexia. I have a hard time with spelling, reading, and writing. When I was in public school I felt frustrated. There was one book that I couldn't read so I would just look at the pictures during reading time. It took me twice as long to take the standardized test then all the other students. Most students take it in one day and I took two days.

My parents now have me in a private school for kids with dyslexia. My reading teacher at my current school teaches me how to decode words, practices spelling different words, and we practice reading sentences by playing games. In language arts we write paragraphs and we take a lot of time learning how to write a good paragraph using different colors for the different types of sentences in our paragraphs.

I think the Reading and Dyslexia Handbook- HB 0237/SB 126 is a good idea because it's like a guide for teachers and parents to know what dyslexia is and how to teach kids with dyslexia. When I was at my public school they didn't really know about dyslexia. This handbook would be written by people who know a lot about dyslexia and reading. They can share what they know about how kids learn to read. The handbook can also explain how to teach kids to read. I think it's important that all kids would be taught to read.

Not all kids will have a chance to go to a private school like me. Therefore, I think ALL kids should have the opportunity to learn the way their brain needs to. Thank you for your time and consideration of supporting HB 0237/SB126.

Alex Murphy (Age 10)
7432 Flamewood Drive
Clarksville, MD

SB 126 - Early Literacy and Dyslexia (Testimony -

Uploaded by: Murray, David

Position: FAV

**Senate Bill 126 – State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia
Practices – Guidance and Assistance**

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

January 27, 2021

**David Murray, Board Member, District 1, Prince George’s County Board of
Education; and Special Educator**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Good Morning Chairman Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and all Committee Members,

My name is David Murray. I serve as the Board Member representing District 1 on the Prince George’s County Board of Education. I am also a dedicated special education teacher. I am here to offer my support for Senate Bill 126 because the guidance and assistance outlined in this bill, is needed to help schools and teachers implement preventative, accelerated and remedial support for students who are struggling to read, including students at risk for reading disabilities like dyslexia.

As you know, dyslexia is a learning disability that is not typically identified by schools until the student has failed to respond to instruction and interventions – sometimes this is as late as 9th grade, which is not ideal. Dyslexia affects areas of the brain that process language – resulting in difficulty reading, spelling, and writing. What many of us may not know is that dyslexia is quite common. It is important to have a plan in place to figure out who will struggle to read AND who is at risk for dyslexia and what to do about it.

As we have learned from our COVID experience, it is useful to provide districts and schools with an evidence-based road map that allows consistency and supports teachers and helps generate positive outcomes for all children. In my classroom, I see children struggle with reading difficulties and learning disabilities every day, and I do my best to help them every single day. I would like to have a Reading and Dyslexia handbook so I and my fellow educators would know what to do to help children who struggle, get the help they need. This Handbook will include evidence-based best practices, protocols and processes to address reading needs and will focus on students who live in poverty, students who are speakers of other languages, students of color and students at risk for and with learning disabilities. It will help teachers and schools ensure core reading and writing curriculum is evidence-based and include resources and tools that are shown to improve student outcomes. Additionally, this Handbook will help schools apply early detection protocols, understand best practices and use that information to close reading gaps. The truth of the matter is – children who struggle with reading, do not catch-up without effective, evidence-based intervention provided by a knowledgeable teacher. Sharing resources, and information as it pertains to best practices is our best path forward.

Children with reading difficulties and dyslexia need us to provide systematic, explicit, evidence-based instruction and interventions that follow the science.

More than 20 states have a handbook, and I am hopeful that Maryland will soon be one of them. I urge a favorable report from this committee on SB 126. Thank you.

2021-01-27 Erin Parker Testimony in Support of SB

Uploaded by: Parker, Erin

Position: FAV

**Testimony to the Senate *Education, Health & Environmental Affairs* Committee
In Support of Senate Bill 126
State Department of Education -
Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and Assistance**

**Erin Parker, Decoding Dyslexia Maryland
January 27, 2021**

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Erin Parker, and I have a ten year old son with dyslexia. I am a chapter leader for Decoding Dyslexia Maryland, which represents parents, students, and educators across Maryland and has 14 local chapters with active members in each school district. I am submitting this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 126 to create a Reading and Dyslexia Handbook.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation found that “[a]bout 16% of children who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade do not graduate from high school on time--a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers.” [Hernandez, Donald J., *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011.](#)

Struggling readers do not "catch up" to their average performing peers unless evidence-based reading instruction and early, intensive intervention is provided; otherwise, the gap between good and poor readers only widens over time. *See generally*, Adams, M. *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print.*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, National Research Council report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, 1998); Stanovich, K. E., *Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy*, Reading Research Quarterly, 21, 360-406, 1986.

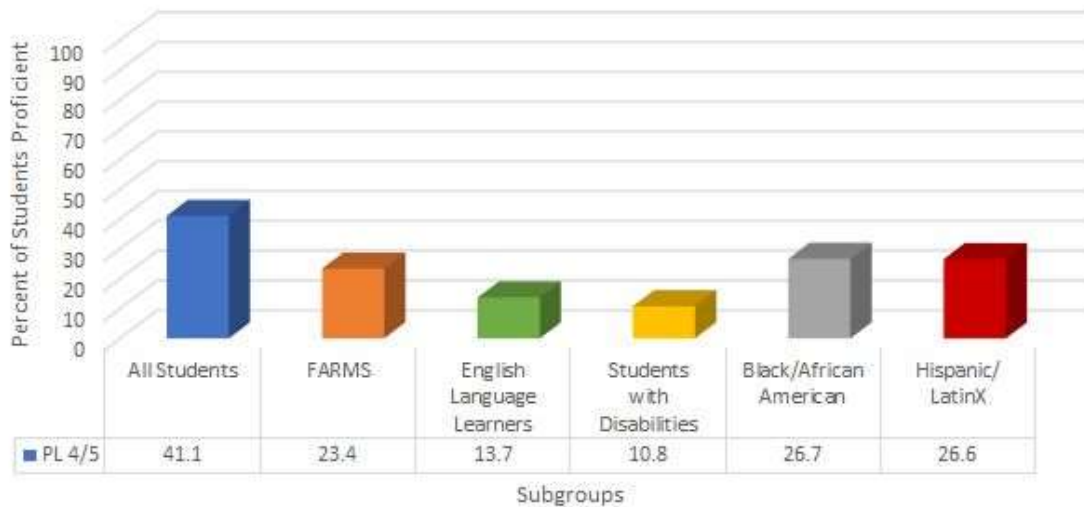
Across the country, approximately one-third of students read below the basic reading level, one-third read at the basic reading level, which is not proficient, and only one-third of students are reading at grade level. Here, in Maryland, across all grade levels only 40-45% of students are **proficient** in reading and writing as measured by the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) scores in English Language Arts:

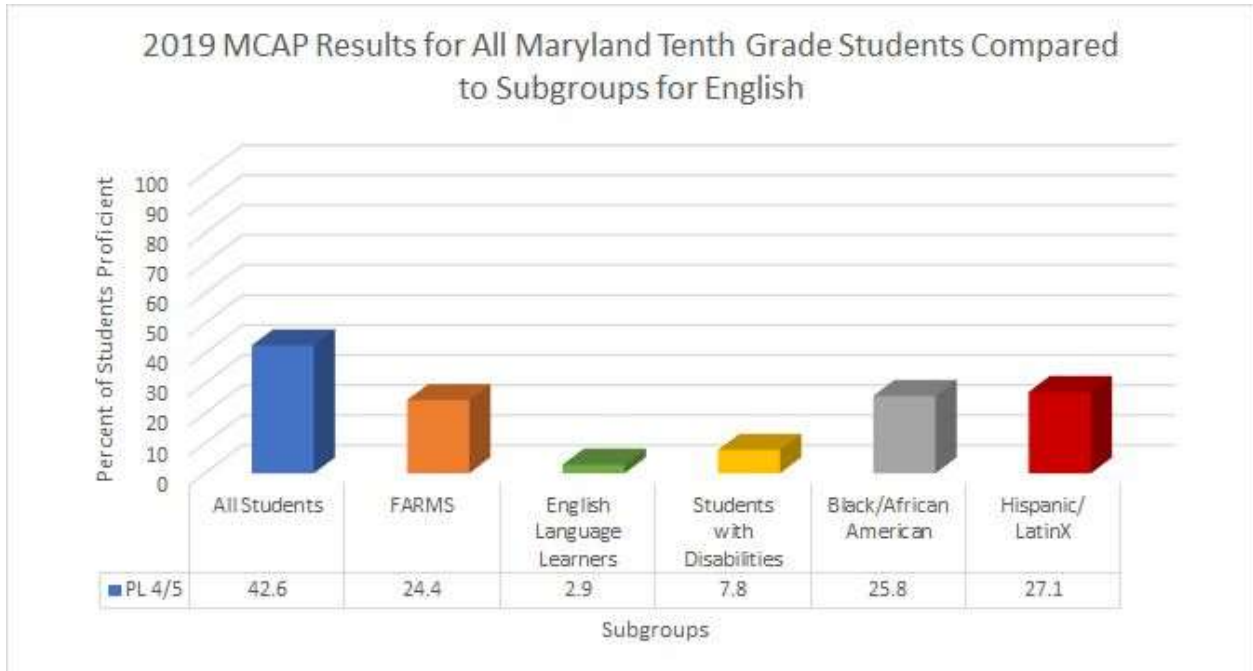
2019 MCAP Results for All Maryland Students by Grade for English Language Arts



Lack of proficient reading is one of the primary causes of the achievement gap for marginalized students, including students of color, students with disabilities, students receiving Free and Reduced Meals, and students who are English language learners. When you look at the statistics for subgroups, the reading and writing outcomes are even worse:

2019 MCAP Results for All Maryland Third Grade Students Compared to Subgroups for English Language Arts





These statistics are from 2019 ***before the pandemic hit***. The adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to be immeasurable. Learning loss suffered by our children could span from falling a few months behind to several years behind in reading. Students who likely would have learned to read without issue without the pandemic are predicted to fall behind.

The [2015 Dyslexia Task Force](#) found that local school system administrators, educators, and parents of K-12 students would benefit from a handbook that includes best practices for reading and dyslexia along with materials and processes to support general educators in the classrooms. See p. 51-52. This bill is proposed to adopt the Task Force recommendation and would bring together classroom teachers, special educators, administrators, and parents to develop a comprehensive resource that would establish a common language and terminology for teaching reading and students with dyslexia. The handbook envisioned by this bill will provide a roadmap for how to help children to recover from learning loss whether caused by the pandemic, poverty or disabilities, using the best evidenced-based methodologies to teach reading.

SB 126 would create a stakeholder advisory group charged with developing a handbook, including the following components:

1. Definitions, indicators and characteristics of reading difficulties;
2. Best practices for reading screening, identification of reading difficulties, instruction, and dyslexia assessment and interventions;
3. Helpful tools and materials to support teachers and parents; and

4. Designation of a dyslexia liaison at MSDE who would facilitate technical assistance to local school systems.

23 states, including Texas, California and New Jersey, have Early Literacy and Dyslexia handbooks that guide implementation of their state literacy requirements.

In December 2019, the findings from the [Wested special education study](#) noted that while students with disabilities required both general and specialized instruction, MSDE's guidance to special educators did not appear to be distributed to general educators. See p. 39. In order to reduce the cost of special education, guidance on best practices for reading instruction in the general education curriculum is imperative. A handbook, which has been vetted by an advisory group of stakeholders from various perspectives, can be used by administrators, general educators and special educators to work collaboratively to reduce the number of students who are failed by ineffective core reading instruction. Further, core reading instruction can be aligned to specialized instruction and interventions.

Students who are helped most by effective core reading instruction are students living in poverty, English language learners, students who experience trauma, and students who are at risk for reading disabilities, like dyslexia. These students and their parents rely on schools to provide effective, evidence-based instruction and intervention frameworks, and the handbook would help schools accomplish this goal. The handbook would collect and make available to all educators, best practices that address reading and dyslexia. It will shine a light on practices that support struggling students to ***prevent and close academic gaps***.

A handbook would also support improved student outcomes by connecting general and special education departments, not only to best practices, ***but to each other***. While the bill does not mandate a specific curriculum or program, it encourages inter-professional practices where educators can learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve outcomes for students. The bill would not interfere with local control, as school districts would still select their own curriculum, but the handbook would provide guidance on evidence-based practices that could help school systems to analyze and adopt curriculum that better aligns to the research. The handbook is a necessary corollary to the Ready to Read Act and will help support its implementation but including best practices on screening and explaining how to use screening data to drive instruction and intervention that is targeted to the needs identified by the screening tool.

Last year, the House considered similar legislation, which was passed unanimously. Unfortunately, the pandemic forced the closure of the legislature prior to the Senate vote. This year, we have clarified the membership of the stakeholder advisory group. We have further clarified that the MSDE liaison does not require the creation of a new position at MSDE; rather, MSDE may choose to incorporate the liaison responsibilities into an existing position, if preferable. Now, more than ever, we need to provide guidance on best practices in reading. The handbook that will result from the passage of SB 126 is a cost-effective way to improve student learning outcomes in reading and help all struggling readers, including children with dyslexia. We urge a favorable report on the bill and thank you for your consideration.

SB126 - Dyslexia.pdf

Uploaded by: Peterson, Matt

Position: FAV

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Baltimore District



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 126 – State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
January 27, 2021

SUPPORT

Background: Senate Bill 126 (SB126) would require the Department of Education to assemble a taskforce of experts and other stakeholders in the Dyslexia field. This taskforce would be charged with creating a comprehensive handbook on Dyslexia to be deployed throughout Maryland schools. This would allow educators to be better equipped to identify and assist students with Dyslexia. This handbook would remain publicly accessible online, and its content would be continuously updated. Additionally, this bill would require the Department to hire a Dyslexia Liaison to be tasked with providing technical assistance on Dyslexia to local school districts.

Written Comments: There is no doubt Dyslexia has a great impact on our society. It is estimated that between 15-20% of the population is affected by some type of Dyslexia related reading disorder. Furthermore, it is believed that the vast majority of Dyslexia cases go undiagnosed, meaning that many Dyslexic students do not receive the help in school they need to have a learning environment that works for them. Often times all that is necessary for Dyslexic students is a slightly more structured learning environment. Early detection of Dyslexia is the key to ensuring students are able to thrive in school. As the legislative arm of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, we represent the Center for Jewish Education, Jewish Community Services, and SHEMESH, all agencies which serve individuals and families impacted by learning disabilities. The Dyslexia handbook outlined in this bill would serve as another vital tool available to educators and parents.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council respectfully urges a favorable report of SB126.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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Member of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Baltimore Jewish Council is an agency of The Associated



2021 MEC Testimony Reading and Dyslexia Handbook S

Uploaded by: Spitulnik, Karleen

Position: FAV



Maryland Education Coalition

Rick Tyler, Chair

www.marylandeducationcoalition.org

md.education.coalition@gmail.com

BILL: SB 126

POSITION: SUPPORT

TITLE: Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices –
Guidance and Assistance

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Health and
Environmental Affairs

Date: January 27, 2021

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) supports Senate Bill 126 which would establish a stakeholder advisory group to develop a Reading and Dyslexia Handbook. The Handbook will help teachers and parents by providing information on evidence-aligned best practices for teaching students with dyslexia and students who require explicit, systematic instruction to learn to read.

When teachers and parents discover that their student is dyslexic, they often do not know what to do or how to teach that child to read. Many teachers report they were not taught about dyslexia in their teacher preparation programs. A Reading and Dyslexia Handbook would provide information on the evidence-aligned best practices for teaching reading that are helpful to all students, but essential for the students who are at risk for reading difficulty and the students with dyslexia. The Handbook would be specific to Maryland as it would be aligned with the Maryland College and Career Reading Standards and the Ready to Read Act (2019).

MEC supports this legislation because:

- 1) **A Handbook that is publicly available to all parents, teachers and administrators is a step towards equitable instruction in reading.** The fight to provide reading interventions for students with dyslexia has been described as a “rich man’s game.”¹ The fortunate dyslexic students who receive appropriate interventions are most often the students whose parents have the time and the means to pay for specialized schools or tutoring. HB237 will not fix reading instruction in Maryland public schools, but it will ensure that information on evidence-aligned reading instruction is readily available to every teacher and administrator. The Handbook will enumerate evidence-aligned components of reading instruction and interventions, assessment and screening information, as well as professional learning topics.
- 2) **A stakeholder advisory group of educators and dyslexia community members will collaborate to produce the Handbook.** A handbook produced with input from varied stakeholders will be more responsive to teacher and parent needs. Additionally, MEC supports meaningful stakeholder engagement in education

¹ [Emily Hanford, Hard to Read: How American schools fail kids with dyslexia, an APM Reports radio documentary, September 11, 2017](#) The students and parents interviewed in this documentary are from Baltimore County, Maryland.

because collaboration with stakeholders is required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

- 3) **A Dyslexia Point-of-Contact at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will be designated.** MSDE will be required to expand an existing position within the English Language Arts department to serve as the dyslexia point-of-contact for school districts seeking advice on how best to support students with dyslexia and provide effective reading instruction. In our experience, local school district administrators do not always know who they can contact at MSDE to get answers to their questions. A knowledgeable point-of-contact will be helpful to local school districts.

For these reasons, MEC supports Senate Bill 126 and urges a favorable report.

Support SB0126HB0237 dyslexia bill.pdf

Uploaded by: Ward, Lindsay

Position: FAV



Support: SB 0126/HB0237

1/21/2021

Maryland Senate
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee Members
Miller Senate Office Building Room 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee Members:

On behalf of the pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs) and fellow pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) Chesapeake Chapter, I am writing to express our support of SB0126/HB0237 bill, the “State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices-Guidelines and Assistance”.

The Maryland Chesapeake Chapter of NAPNAP believes this piece of legislation which requires the establishment of a stakeholder advisory group charged with the development of a reading and dyslexia resource manual will play a vital role in detecting the signs of dyslexia as well as the provision of consistent and current best practices on reading screening, instruction and interventions for children with dyslexia. Currently, there is no resource available for teachers and parents to better understand the signs of dyslexia, the impact of dyslexia on learning and how to implement changes in the classroom and at home to the struggling reader with dyslexia. This bill will provide this resource to teachers and families.

Dyslexia is an unexpected difficulty in reading for someone with normal or higher than normal intelligence. It is most commonly due to a difficulty in phonological processing (the appreciation of individual spoken words) which then may affect the individuals’ ability to speak, read and spell. Early diagnosis and intervention is critical. It is estimated that 20% of the population is affected by dyslexia and it comprises 80-90% of all learning disabilities. It is the most common neuro-cognitive disorder. When dyslexia is diagnosed early and individuals receive evidence-based interventions and accommodations, they can lead very successful lives and perform at high career levels.

This bill provides the development of a resource to teachers and parents to enhance early recognition and implementation of evidence based interventions for individuals with dyslexia both within schools and at home. This bill also will bring enhanced awareness to the entire educational community including families of the signs of dyslexia, the need for early intervention and the evidence-based successful interventions for the individual with dyslexia.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chesapeake Chapter of NAPNAP extends their support to SB0126/HB0237 bill, the “State Department of Education- Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidelines and Assistance.” The pediatric advanced practice nurses of your state are grateful to you for your full attention to these crucial issues affecting children and families within Maryland. The members of Chesapeake Chapter of the National association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners are committed to



National Association of
Pediatric Nurse PractitionersSM
MD: CHESAPEAKE

improving the health and advocating for Maryland pediatric patients. If we can be of further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Deborah Busch, the Chesapeake Chapter President at 410-614-6284 or dbusch1@jhu.edu.

Sincerely,

Deborah W. Busch DNP, CRNP

Deborah W. Busch DNP, CRNP, FAANP ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
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National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP)
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Maryland Psychological Association - SB 126 Dyslex

Uploaded by: Brocato, Barbara

Position: FWA



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January 15, 2021

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The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
11 Bladen Street
West Miller Senate Office Building, Room 2
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: SB126 – State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and Assistance

Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists from throughout the state, is writing in support of SB 126 – **State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and Assistance** with a language amendment.

We are recommending that the language in Section (D) be changed from “advisory group shall **develop** tools and materials” to “shall **identify** tools and materials” to more clearly indicate the role of the advisory group as gathering and providing information about materials that have already been established as evidence-based rather than creating new materials.

We are writing in support of this bill as part of the ongoing efforts to improve the literacy skills of all students in the state of Maryland. The bill is designed to support the development of a Dyslexia Handbook, an evidence-based resource that will be invaluable to schools and teachers as they seek to identify, understand and intervene effectively to address reading difficulties. In our work with families, schools and professionals it has been our experience that this information is not readily accessible to teachers – our professionals on the front lines of our education. The development of a Dyslexia Handbook will be a major positive step towards providing effective instruction and intervention to every Maryland student. This will help ensure that every Maryland child develops a life skill that is critical not only to their academic success, but also to their lifelong success and health as adults.

For these reasons, the Maryland Psychological Association asks for a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 126 with the language amendment suggested.

Thank you for considering our comments on SB126. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or exec@marylandpsychology.org.

Sincerely,

Esther Finglass

Esther Finglass, Ph.D.

President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.

Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs

Testimony of Dr William Flook - SUPPORT with Amend

Uploaded by: Flook, William

Position: FWA

January 27, 2021

The Honorable Senator Paul Pinsky, Chair
Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Senate Bill 126 – Support with amendment

Dear Senator Pinsky and members of the Committee.

My name is Dr. William Flook, and I am speaking on behalf of the Maryland Psychological Association, in support of the bill before you today. I am a licensed psychologist with over fifty years in service to public education, including work in three Maryland public school systems and at the Maryland State Department of Education.

My service has been largely focused on students with learning and behavioral challenges. For our schools to be able to address these challenges, and to help our students to learn and to grow, several things are necessary:

- It is essential to understand the problem – school staff need knowledge.
- It is critically important to identify problems early – school staff need to know what to look for.
- It is just as important to know what to do, and to be able to do it – school staff need training and experience in effective, evidence-based interventions.
- And schools need to have in place tiered systems of student support to manage the process, measure its outcomes, and make adjustments as needed.

So when we think about this in terms of the critically important life skill of literacy, all of these elements need to be in place for children who are struggling with reading. Historically we have seen a significant lack of knowledge and expertise among public school teachers and support staff regarding the early identification of reading problems, and what to do about them. And we have seen a growing recognition of the need to improve our identification of children struggling with early reading, and of providing them with evidence-based supports. Many Maryland school systems have worked to improve their focus on this area in

recent years – I can cite the Baltimore County Public Schools and the Kent County Public Schools from my own experiences there.

The Maryland State Department of Education has a most important role to play in all this. To its credit, MSDE has also been devoting an increasing amount of time and attention to the subject of dyslexia and early reading difficulty. But we still see a lack of consistency across Maryland’s 24 public school systems, and we have a long way to go. So we need the establishment of the Stakeholder Advisory Group designated in this bill, and we need it to develop this Reading and Dyslexia Handbook. It will enable MSDE to substantially up its game, greatly improving its role in providing resources and guidance, and ensuring consistent implementation of effective practices in this vital area.

This Handbook will serve as an invaluable resource to local systems not just for the early identification of reading problems, but even more importantly as a source of effective and evidence-based interventions. And the Handbook will enable our schools to substantially improve the tiered systems of interventions and supports which they have been developing over the past years.

So – please pass this important bill. But as I believe the sponsors are aware, there is a need for a small amendment. The original language of this bill called for the workgroup to “develop” tools and materials for the identification of dyslexia and early reading difficulties – but in fact to do it right, the development of such tools requires years of costly research. Such an investment of time and effort would be both beyond the capacity of the Advisory Group, and in fact not necessary. Such instruments already exist; the task of the workgroup should be to review them and to “identify” the best ones available, to include in the Handbook. So we recommend that simple change of wording.

Thank you for your support of Senate Bill 126.

SB 126 .Literacy Practices Guidance and Dyslexia H

Uploaded by: Woolums, John

Position: UNF

BILL: Senate Bill 126
TITLE: State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and Assistance
DATE: January 27, 2021
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 126 and supports the ongoing implementation of the reforms enacted in 2019 in the important policy area of identifying and responding to students with reading disabilities and challenges, including dyslexia.

In 2019, after deliberations through multiple legislative sessions, the legislature enacted a new law to require, beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, each local school board to ensure that students are screened to identify if the student is at risk for reading difficulties. Under the new law, if the screening results indicate that the student is at risk of reading difficulties, the local board must provide supplemental reading instruction, as appropriate, and provide a notification letter to the student's parent as specified. Furthermore, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must develop and update resources for local boards every four years and provide technical support to local boards allowing them to provide training opportunities annually. In addition, local boards must report annually to MSDE beginning with the 2020-2021 school year. The bill took effect on July 1, 2019.

As this Committee knows, MABE generally opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum, courses of instruction, assessments, or graduation requirements, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board of Education. Exceptions to this rule are rare. In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for guiding and delivering a high quality statewide system of public education through state standards and accountability measures, and locally governed and administered curriculum, teaching, and learning.

MABE appreciates the intent of this legislation to further the objectives of the legislation recently passed in 2019. However, in light of the ongoing implementation of the 2019 law, and the looming challenges for MSDE in implementing the many facets of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, MABE respectfully requests that no new educational programs be established at this time.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 126.

AACPS SB126 Dyslexia Handbook INFO 1.27.21.pdf

Uploaded by: Ortiz, Jeanette

Position: INFO



**SB126 STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - EARLY LITERACY AND DYSLEXIA PRACTICES -
GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE**

January 27, 2021

EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) is submitting a letter of information on **SB126 State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and Assistance**. This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education to establish, by October 1, 2021, a stakeholder advisory group to develop a reading and dyslexia handbook to guide local school systems in the implementation of best practices for early literacy and dyslexia. It requires a completed handbook be made available to the public by June 1, 2022, and the development of tools and materials to address the needs of at-risk and struggling students with dyslexia. The bill also requires MSDE to update the handbook every 3 years.

In 2019, after deliberations through multiple legislative sessions, the legislature enacted a new law to require, beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, each local school board to ensure that students are screened to identify if the student is at risk for reading difficulties. Under the new law, if the screening results indicate that the student is at risk of reading difficulties, the local board must provide supplemental reading instruction, as appropriate, and provide a notification letter to the student's parent as specified. Furthermore, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must develop and update resources for local boards every four years and provide technical support to local boards allowing them to provide training opportunities annually. In addition, local boards must report annually to MSDE beginning with the 2020-2021 school year. AACPS is in full compliance with the requirements of the 2019 legislation and a lot of work has gone into the screener election, administration and response to instruction.

AACPS has concerns with the prescriptive nature of the handbook proposed in SB126. While the handbook is said to be best practices, processes and procedures to guide local school systems, it is extremely prescriptive, and the bill is written in a manner that is almost mandatory. AACPS also has concerns that this bill specifically provides that the State Leadership Team of Decoding Dyslexia Maryland will select two members of the advisory group established under the bill. There are many dyslexia advocacy groups in the State, and we believe that it is more appropriate for MSDE to select the two members of the dyslexia advocacy community.

AACPS appreciates the intent of this legislation to further the objectives of the recently enacted 2019 legislation. However, in light of the ongoing implementation of the 2019 law and the forthcoming immense work for MSDE to implement the many facets of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, AACPS recommends that General Assembly reconsider enacting new educational programs at this time.

Thank you for consideration of this information regarding SB126.