

Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 237: STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – EARLY LITERACY AND DYSLEXIA PRACTICES – GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE

JANUARY 20, 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 House Bill 237. 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 House Bill 237. For more information, please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Chairperson, at 410-727-6352, ext. 2505 or at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org.

Respectfully submitted,

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