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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 237 – State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance

Ways and Means Committee
January 20, 2021

SUPPORT

Background: House Bill 237 (HB237) 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 HB237.

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.