

DECODING DYSLEXIA MARYLAND



House Bill 475: Open Source Phonics Matching Grant Program Act

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

SUPPORT

Written Testimony

Thank you Chair and members of the committee. Decoding Dyslexia Maryland members support House Bill 475 and respectfully request a favorable committee report.

We extend our gratitude to Delegate Korman for his unwavering advocacy for students facing literacy challenges, and we sincerely appreciate his sponsorship of this crucial legislation.

House Bill 475 possesses immense potential to unlock new avenues of support for parents of students learning to read, particularly those who may encounter difficulties in this process.

Dyslexia, a neurobiological learning disability, affects up to 20% of the population. Unfortunately, many Maryland classrooms employ whole-language and balanced literacy reading instruction methods, leaving these students, along with others, frustrated and lagging behind in their reading skills.

House Bill 475 addresses this problem head-on by:

- **Supporting families and caregivers with evidence-aligned materials:** Parents of struggling students and students with dyslexia want to know how they can help at home. This bill provides a free source of evidence-based materials for instruction, assessment, and student practice. Currently, there is limited access to at-home, open source, family-friendly teaching and learning materials for reading.
- **Leveraging open-source resources:** This bill supports organizations that make free, accessible phonics materials, thus reducing financial barriers for families and educators who cannot afford to purchase expensive materials.



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- **Empowering communities:** Through funding open-source phonics initiatives, the bill enables local organizations to customize resources to meet the specific needs of their communities. For example, libraries would be able to develop, promote, and distribute tailored materials.

WHAT IS GAINED?

- **Improved reading skills:** Access to quality phonics materials empowers struggling students to strengthen their reading skills, fostering confidence and academic success.
- **Empowered parents:** The bill provides free resources, enabling parents to actively support their children's learning journey.
- **Reduced financial burden:** Free, open-source materials alleviate the financial strain often associated with the extra expenses often required to support a struggling student or a student with dyslexia.
- **Community collaboration:** The bill fosters collaboration between organizations, educators, and parents, and creates a more supportive network for learning between home and school.

Call to Action:

We urge you to support House Bill 475 -- this bill represents a significant step toward ensuring all children, including those with dyslexia, have access to the resources they need to read.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to a favorable committee report.