

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1231  
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**January 18, 2023**

**By: Lea Kugel, Assistant Director, Office of Specially Designed Services**

**701-328-4561**

**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lea Kugel, and I am the Assistant Director in the Office of Specially Designed Services with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), where I hold the portfolio for Specific Learning Disabilities. I am here to provide information relating to House Bill 1231 relating to mandatory dyslexia screening and the dyslexia screening and intervention program.

During the 2021-2022 school year, there were 116,694 students enrolled in public education in ND. Of those, 17,054, or 13%, were students who had been identified with disabilities, and 4,728 (28%) students with disabilities had a primary identification area in specific learning disabilities. In ND, the most prevalent disability category in special education is Specific Learning Disabilities. The International Dyslexia Association reports that about 85% of those students identified with a Specific Learning Disability have a primary learning disability in reading or language processing.

The International Dyslexia Association states that 15–20% of the student population may exhibit some symptoms of dyslexia, including slow or inaccurate

reading, poor spelling, poor writing, or mixing up similar words. Not all students with symptoms of dyslexia will qualify for special education, but they will likely struggle with many aspects of academic learning and benefit from systematic, explicit instruction in reading, writing, and language.

Early identification of students with dyslexic characteristics and the appropriate provision of individual interventions can significantly affect the individual student's future academic success. When students are screened at an early age, and appropriate interventions are provided through direct, systematic, and explicit instruction, the student's reading gap between them and their peers may close to the point that they can participate in the general education classroom without individualized support. Not only does identifying students early and providing appropriate interventions enable the student to be successful in the general education classroom, but it may also reduce the number of students identified with a specific learning disability when they get older. Most students with dyslexia aren't eligible for IEPs, and a large portion of those students aren't even identified with dyslexia. This is far beyond a special education issue. This is a general education issue.

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony, and I will stand for any questions you may have.