

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD FOR KIDS WITH DYSLEXIA
HB 1306 - SUPPORT Testimony

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Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record, my name is Kayla Effertz Kleven and I am here in support of HB 1306. Vouchers -- just the word makes many in the room uncomfortable. It even makes the hairs on the back of my neck go up. I'm a public school supporter, but at this juncture of the road, I can tell you first hand that 100% of our public schools are not equipped to provide support and assistance to students with dyslexia. Progress has been made and I applaud that hard work, however even if we could implement professional development, universal screeners or even add more teachers to the system, we won't be ready this fall to fully address the needs. We are in need of partnerships of qualified and vetted individuals to get kids and families the assistance they need to simply learn.

And as the word voucher makes me queasy, even more uncomfortable is the idea that only the kids who have families with means are the ones who are getting assistance. Let's crosswalk this idea to schools who don't have enough funding for transportation in a specific area--we allow for "transportation grants" where families are reimbursed for the mileage they drive to get their child to school. In essence, that program is a transportation voucher. This makes economical sense--when there is not the economy of students to put a bus route in place, a reimbursement happens for the family. Why wouldn't we do the same for kids with a learning disability? Furthermore, I would ask what is the point of funding transportation if when the student arrives, they aren't able to learn?

Our family takes my stepson to private tutoring 2 times per week. I'm the first one to say, kids are adaptable, but it's clear the additional anxiety and stress that it causes my 8th grader when we leave and come back to the building. Nevermind the embarrassment when there's a substitute teacher and he needs to argue in front of the class why he is excused to leave. I would ask the committee to consider amending this bill to allow for tutors, who have passed a local vetting process (background checks, etc) to have access in the school. I would normally advocate that this is a local decision, however after the past year it's been proven to our family that there is resistance for allowing outside educational entities in the public school. The reasons I'm given, in writing, "we don't have precedence", "we don't have time to establish a protocols." I even was given the initial solution of having to pay for space, but when I said how much, the conversation ended. It's exceptionally clear that in my circumstance, enabling language is required to remove the disruptions for the kids.

Thank you for your time, and I will take any questions you may have.