

**Testimony for Public Hearing**  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Public Hearing on House Bill 1231**

**March 6th, 2023**

Good morning, Chairman, and members of the Education Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to address House Bill #1231...

My name is Kari Bucholz, Founder and Executive Director of Haley's Hope. Haley's Hope is a nonprofit Dyslexia Learning Center located in West Fargo, serving students across the State of North Dakota.

To give you a brief background on why I am here, my journey with dyslexia started with my son Haley, just one month into his pre-school year back in 2005. After being told he was not keeping up with the other kids in his class, our family started on a 2 ½ roller coaster trying to find an answer to our bright, young boy's academic challenges. After Title 1 interventions, reading 20 minutes a night, neuro appointments, eye doctors, hearing tests, and private tutors, the last straw for me was the fact I lost my highly intelligent, happy-go-lucky little boy to crying, not wanting to go to school or be social with his friends. The embarrassment and emotional toll were just too much for him at the ripe age of 6. I ended up following this little word, dyslexia, which led me to St. Paul for the diagnosis that gave us the answer. Our son Haley is profoundly dyslexic and severely dysgraphic. I tell you this as a backdrop to why I passionately support House Bill 1231. Had our education and medical systems known what to look for back then, we would have understood the reason Haley could not read or write and be able to intervene sooner.

I have dedicated the past 18 years to studying dyslexia and language-based learning disabilities. I always hoped North Dakota could start to **say** the word **dyslexia**, **believe** it is real, and work on **discovering how to help students** across our state who struggle with this learning style. That partially happened with the passing of HB 1461, a dyslexia

pilot program. I say partially because the pilot program, while extremely successful, needs to be expanded to include the entire state of North Dakota.

There is so much to talk about regarding dyslexia and the lack of resources for students, it is difficult to know where to start.

The phrase: “Kids are taught to read up to third grade, and from third grade on, they need to read to learn”. This sounds like a perfect progression, but if you are dyslexic, and not identified early, meaning kindergarten or first grade, the chance of reading at-grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is simply impossible.

**The fact is...If you can't read (or write) the ability to LEARN is totally wiped out.**

Early literacy, the development of skills to transition from learning to read to reading to learn, is a foundation of academic success. Students with dyslexia are at risk of a lifetime of illiteracy when they don't receive adequate support to identify and build skills to read and write, the cornerstone of success.

To briefly demonstrate what I mean, I would like to introduce you to a few of the students in our ND Education system. The students we work with come from over 188 different communities in North Dakota, not just the Fargo/West Fargo Area. (Refer to the list of counties)

### **Student 1: 6th-grade boy**

- On an IEP since Kindergarten.
- His IEP this year, in September of 2022, stated his school-wide benchmarks were between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> percentile for reading.
- He has 3 goals in his IEP (reading, math, language)
- Reading: to move from 46 cwpm to 80 cwpm.
  - Goal for this grade 50 % is 140 cwpm/ 25 % is 111 cwpm/winter.
  - 50 minutes a day intervention small group

### **Our testing:**

Phonological Awareness at the 5 % ile/Poor

Reading <1 % ile

Spelling <1 % ile

Please review the writing samples from this 6th-grade student.

Can you read the story he wrote?

Now, look at the words he was unable to spell correctly. Words that are used in everyday reading and writing.

**Student 2:** a 2nd-grade boy

- Has been in speech for 4 years, both at school and privately
- Chronic ear infections
- Wears glasses
- Very social
- Reading Corps 1x week for 30 minutes
- Summer School

**Our Testing:**

Reading: <1 % ile

Spelling: 3 % ile

Please review the spelling of words this young boy had trouble with, specifically the words written without any vowels.

**Student 3:** How old is this student?

Compare the words spelled wrong on this one with the other samples I gave you.

After 18 years of dedication to learning about dyslexia and LBLD, and 12 years of directly supporting over 1200 students and their families with adequate identification, OG-based tutoring for literacy, math, study skills, and 504 and IEP support. I still don't understand **why our great state of North Dakota continues to allow something we can easily identify and remediate to rob our community of future workers and leaders.**

Students with dyslexia are at risk of a lifetime of illiteracy when they don't receive adequate support to identify and build skills to read and write, the cornerstone of success. Improving literacy rates improves social and emotional well-being and can move the needle on broader societal dilemmas, such as dropout rates, delinquency, substance abuse, unemployment, and generational inequities.

If you can't read or write, it is difficult to function in our society. For instance:

1. How many of you work up this morning to an alarm clock you set last night, looked at your watch or phone to tell the time, understanding am and pm.
2. How many picked up the newspaper or magazine, looked at a website, or read a pile of papers like the stack you have in front of you now?
3. How many stopped to get gas, had to read the instructions of how to do it, push the numbers for your zip code, and known to push the words "yes" or "no", are you paying with a credit card, cash, debit, do you want a carwash...what type...
4. Did you purchase a coffee today? Read the list of items available?
5. Who took a pen or pencil to jot something down? Sent a text, or email? Fill out a job application and sign your name when using a credit card.

Today, House Bill 1231 is in front of you for consideration. Today you can impact thousands of children by providing dyslexia-specific resources to educators across our state. Fill the void our educators are feeling when they are not able to adequately help their students due to a lack of information, education, and resources. Student literacy failure is not due to a lack of effort by our educators or our children. From today on, the state of ND can either move forward in eliminating illiteracy in our students or continue to sweep it under the rug and complain about the social, emotional, and economic devastation our communities will continue to face because of untreated dyslexia.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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**Qualifications:**

- Certified in Orton Gillingham-based Barton Reading and Spelling System- 2008
- Certified in Screening for Dyslexia - 2011
- Certified Structured Literacy Teacher (C-SLCT) -The Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI)
- Dyslexia Studies and Language-Based Learning Disability- Graduate Certificate- Southern New Hampshire University - 2016
- International Dyslexia Association- Upper Midwest Branch- Board Member
- Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Learning Center- Multisensory Math 1
- Certified Irlen Screener

