

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1306  
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**March 15, 2023**

**By: Brenda Ehrmantraut, Assistant Director Academic Support**

**701-328-1809**

**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Brenda Ehrmantraut, and I am the Assistant Director of Academic Support with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). I represent the Office of Academic Support in the co-administration of the ND Dyslexia Pilot program along with Lea Kugel representing the Office of Specially Designed Services. I am here to provide information on House Bill 1306 regarding a dyslexia voucher program.

The International Dyslexia Association states that 15–20% of the student population may exhibit some characteristics of dyslexia, including slow or inaccurate reading, poor spelling, poor writing, or mixing up similar words. Dyslexia is a spectrum disorder. Early identification and intervention provide the best support for all students with reading challenges, but longer-term, more intensive support may be required for students with profound dyslexia. Not all students with symptoms of dyslexia will qualify for special education, but they will likely struggle with many aspects of academic learning. Systematic, explicit

instruction in reading, writing, and language benefit many students who are challenged by dyslexia.

Schools in North Dakota currently have two processes in place which support students with dyslexic characteristics within the general education classroom. First, schools are required to have reading screening processes which include phonetic awareness, decoding and spelling (NDCC 15.1-32). Second, all K-3 educators are required to be trained in systematic, direct instruction of literacy, an approach known to benefit students with dyslexia as well as students struggling with other literacy challenges. This is often referred to as science of reading training. The ND Dyslexia Pilot Program districts have provided information in periodic reports to DPI that demonstrates supporting students with dyslexia is a complex process. This literacy instruction process is managed through a systemic approach that allows for matching individual learner needs with aligned evidence-based approaches. Educator awareness of dyslexia, high-quality core instructional materials and approaches, school screening processes, and specialists trained in intervention approaches are all part of this complex system. Much can be done within a well-designed, well-informed local school system to meet the needs of students with dyslexia traits. Local school systems can provide intervention and instruction aligned with best practices known to support students with dyslexia, yet some families and students may require or prefer alternate approaches, resources,

or supports to address the unique needs stemming from the complexity of their learner's dyslexia traits or diagnosis.

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