



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/06/2024

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1657 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires all public schools to implement universal screenings for students in kindergarten through third grade to identify and support students who are at risk of dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) provides comments on HB 1657, which requires all public schools to implement universal screenings for students in kindergarten through third grade to identify and support students at risk of dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

The Department believes this bill has the potential to significantly and positively impact systemic improvement in literacy. However, implementation of this legislation will be a heavy lift that would require a funded dedicated full-time employee to provide statewide leadership and guidance in this area. Additionally, the Department would require recurring funding to cover the costs of implementing a dyslexia screener by the 2026-2027 school year and each year thereafter.

Rather than moving forward with a mandate to implement universal screenings, the Department would recommend formulating a dyslexia work group. The Department recognizes that sufficient time is needed for the implementation of such a critical piece of legislation and that engaging educational partners is critical when aiming for significant systemic improvement. Therefore, the Department would recommend creating a dyslexia work group that will ensure that screening mechanisms seamlessly

integrate within the Hawaii Multi-Tiered System of Support (HMTSS) and provide an intentional approach to engage vital educational partners to support parents and bolster pre-service and in-service development for future and current educators.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
February 06, 2024

The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Committee on Education
The Honorable Representative Linda Ichiyama, Chair
Representative Committee on Water & Land
Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Woodson, Representative Ichiyama, and Committee members:

SUBJECT: HB1657 RELATING TO EDUCATION

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB1657**, which requires all public schools to implement universal screenings for students in kindergarten through third grade to identify and support students who are at risk of dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

The Council recognizes the critical importance of early screenings in identifying and supporting students at risk of dyslexia and other learning disabilities. Early intervention is fundamental in fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. It is crucial to acknowledge that developmental disabilities, which are severe, long-term problems impacting cognitive function, can often manifest as learning disabilities. A study titled "Atypical Brain Development" by researchers Jeffrey W. Gilger and Bonnie J. Kaplan underscores the interconnected nature of these challenges, emphasizing the need for comprehensive screening measures.

According to recent statistics provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about one in six children in the U.S. experience one or more developmental disabilities or other developmental delays. This reinforces the urgency of implementing measures such as universal screenings to address the diverse needs of students and increase available, accessible education.

Intellectual disabilities and learning disabilities can overlap and co-occur, necessitating tailored support systems within educational settings. With early and accurate diagnosis through universal screenings, a management plan can be established to help children thrive despite developmental and learning challenges. This aligns with the overarching goal of creating an inclusive educational system that caters to the diverse needs of all students.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB1657**.

Sincerely,

SB2381 Relating to Technology Access for Individuals with Disabilities
February 08, 2022
Page 2 of 2

Daintry Bartoldus, Executive Administrator

HB-1657

Submitted on: 2/2/2024 9:54:14 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dyslexia is often undiagnosed and that can obviously have very negative consequences for the child's educational progress over the years. For that reason, this is a good idea.

HB-1657

Submitted on: 2/4/2024 11:44:38 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Regina Gregory	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

strong support

Dear Mr. Woodson,

I am here to express my strong support for Bill HB1657 which advocates for the recognition of dyslexia and implementation of dyslexia screening across all public schools in Hawaii. As a mother of a dyslexic child, a consultant, coach and advocate for individuals and families with dyslexia and a board member of the Hawaii International Dyslexia Association, I have witnessed the far-reaching impact of undiagnosed dyslexia on students' academic journeys, and I believe this bill is an essential step towards addressing this issue and ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all.

Hawaii's current status, being one of only three states in the country that does not officially recognize dyslexia and one of nine that does not conduct universal screening for dyslexia when all children enter school, is a significant concern. Dyslexia affects up to 20% of the population, and by not recognizing and screening for it, we are ignoring a major underrepresented group in our state. Minorities and those in poverty are even less likely to be diagnosed and receive the services they require, exacerbating existing disparities within our community.

It is disheartening that Hawaii is one of three states that does not acknowledge dyslexia, and this oversight sends a message that we are intentionally ignoring a substantial segment of our population. Currently falling under the umbrella term of "Special Learning Disability. "...the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services issued a Dear Colleague letter that specifically clarifies that nothing in federal law prohibits the use of the word dyslexia in evaluation, eligibility determinations, and individualized education programs (IEP) for students. Anecdotally, however, state and local educational agencies are still reluctant to specifically reference the word dyslexia, thus denying such students the specific services they need to succeed.

The article on screening for dyslexia from the National Center of Improving Literacy emphasizes the necessity of early screening and intervention services for students with literacy-related disabilities, including dyslexia. Early identification allows for targeted support in areas such as self-regulation, executive function, reading, writing, language processing, and comprehension. Effective prevention and early reading intervention services, focused on the literacy-related problems that students at risk experience, are crucial for preventing these difficulties from becoming more severe over time.

The importance of early screening cannot be overstated. Early identification of children at risk with dyslexia or other reading impairments is not only a preventative measure but ~~also~~ a means to provide timely and targeted support. Implementing a structured literacy curriculum and evidence-based supports for systematic reading instruction are essential components of addressing dyslexia and supporting struggling readers effectively.

Without screenings, students are often not identified until at least the third grade for some they are never identified, making it nearly impossible to catch up. This delay not only affects academic performance but also impacts students' confidence and behavior.

The consequences of not being able to read proficiently are directly linked to higher dropout rates, increased homelessness, incarceration rates, and a failure to reach an individual's full potential.

The documentary "Reading Rights" by the NAACP rightly states that we are breaking students' civil rights by not teaching them to read. Blaming students for their difficulties when the necessary steps for identification and effective reading instruction have not been taken is counterproductive. Our country is facing a crisis in terms of students' reading proficiency, and Hawaii has a unique opportunity to lead the way in addressing this issue.

I urge Mr Woodson and the committee to support and pass Bill HB1657. By doing so, we are not only recognizing the unique needs of dyslexic students but also taking a significant stride toward fostering a literate, inclusive, and equitable educational environment for all students in Hawaii. Embracing the word "dyslexia" is not just a matter of terminology but a commitment to understanding and addressing the neurodiversity of our students.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I am hopeful that with the passage of this bill, we can make a profound and positive impact on the lives of our students and the future of our community.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Leoiki-Drino
Dyslexia Coach, Consultant & Advocate
808-223-6858

February 1, 2024

Aloha Chair Woodson and Vice Chair La Chica,

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration of HB 1657. I write to you in strong support of this measure, both as a parent of a child attending a HIDOE public school and as an education expert with a PhD in Literacy Curriculum and Instruction.

The International Dyslexia Association (2020) estimates that [15-20% of the K-12 school population demonstrates symptoms of dyslexia](#), which is a federally-recognized specific learning disability that often requires the services of a 504 Plan or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Evidence shows that [dyslexia symptoms can be detected as early as preschool](#) (Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity, 2022), and early detection and targeted intervention are critical for supporting dyslexic students with learning to read and write. This is why HB 1657 is critically important for the keiki of our state.

While the Department of Education does currently require universal screeners in elementary and middle school, there are a number of assessments in use from school to school, which means that any aggregated data from these screeners cannot be reliably analyzed for statewide strengths and needs. HB 1657 would be an excellent step towards a common universal screener that is also a “Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tool”, leading to more reliable and valid data for statewide decision-making regarding school quality, as well as to early identification and intervention for students with possible dyslexia. To this end, I especially urge the representatives to consider placing a limit on the number of allowed “Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools” that the Department can identify, ideally to a single, common tool, in order to create a more reliable picture of the prevalence of dyslexia in our student population.

I would also like to highlight a current problem of practice in the educational landscape regarding universal screeners. Many publishing companies have developed computer-based universal screeners, often accompanied by a suite of computerized “interventions”. One such company is Curriculum Associates’ *iReady Diagnostic*, which is in wide use throughout our state. This universal screener is *not* a “Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tool”, nor are the computerized “interventions” the most appropriate means of intensively supporting students with literacy difficulties. [Face-to-face, targeted tutoring from a qualified teacher with specialized training](#) is the much better way to support students with dyslexia (e.g., Al Otaiba et al., 2009).

Recently, [Ohio conducted a Request for Information to determine its allowable “Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tool”](#), and received nine submissions, including from *iReady Diagnostic*. They determined seven tools met their criteria - not including *iReady*. While technology should play a crucial role in our students’ learning, there are many situations in which computerized experiences cannot replace face-to-face. Universal screening and intervention for dyslexia in young children is one such situation where a face-to-face assessment cannot be replaced. I urge the representatives to consider this in their guidance to the Department, and I am hopeful

that HB 1657 results in the reduction or elimination of current universal screening practices in favor of highly-rated, face-to-face “Qualified Dyslexia Screening Tools”.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Padesky". The signature is stylized with a large, prominent letter 'P' at the beginning.

Christopher Padesky
Chaminade University
Writing as an Individual Citizen

HB-1657

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 5:46:31 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

I am in support of this bill. My son has reading challenges.

Mahalo nui loa

Leilani Kailiawa

Send DataSend Data

HB-1657

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 8:24:46 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy Martin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong support of HB1657 which would require all DOE schools to implement universal screening for learning differences. If 20% of the population learns differently than the other 80%, it likely means that at least two people on this committee could have learning differences. It surely means that some of your kids do as well. Early detection is the best way to identify those students who receive, interpret, or process information differently and those who could adapt and thrive if provided with the type of support or tools that meet their needs. Mahalo for considering this bill and my testimony.

Aloha,

Christy Martin



david.miyashiro@hawaiikidscan.org
hawaiikidscan.org

David Miyashiro
Executive Director

February 6, 2024

Committee on Education
Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

HawaiiKidsCAN strongly supports HB1657, which requires all public schools to implement universal screenings for students in kindergarten through third grade to identify and support students who are at risk of dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawaii has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

Only half of Hawaii's students read proficiently, yet there are insufficient early detection policies and standardized assessment regulations in Hawaii to address students at risk of having dyslexia. Hawaii is one of three states to have no dyslexia-specific laws related to student supports.¹ Currently, there are no laws that explicitly define dyslexia and give guidance and support for interventions. This void is allowing many students in Hawaii to get lost between the cracks, as their needs are not being accurately identified and supported.

Accordingly, data shows that students who are not identified as struggling before grade three and brought up to proficiency have significantly lower rates of success in the future, are four times more likely not to graduate from high school on time, and have higher rates of future incarceration and other negative outcomes.^{2 3} Students need

¹ <https://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/dyslexia-laws-2018/#:~:text=Only%203%20states%20have%20no,%3A%20Hawaii%2C%20Idaho%2C%20Vermont.>

² <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/study-third-grade-reading-predicts-later-high-school-graduation/2011/04>

³ <https://governorsfoundation.org/gelf-articles/early-literacy-connection-to-incarceration/>

proper intervention methods that are scientifically based as early as possible to ensure their success. Many states have already seen the need to adopt policies that address students with dyslexia, which makes up one in five students.⁴ It is imperative that Hawaii takes the charge to identify our struggling readers to help our kids reach better academic and life outcomes.

This bill will address this issue head-on, moving schools away from the “wait to fail” method, whereby students with dyslexia are not identified until they have experienced prolonged reading failure. Research has shown that the wait to fail framework is problematic for multiple reasons, including the negative impact reading challenges can have on the emotional well-being of struggling students and the difficulty students face in meeting grade-level expectations when reading interventions are initiated in later elementary school.⁵

Furthermore, mandating scientifically-based screeners for students in grades K-3 will help to find struggling learners early on and ensure that all students get a quality assessment tool. By core elements such as ensuring phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding and encoding skills, and rapid naming are addressed through screeners, we are creating a holistic profile of our students in Hawaii, equipping teachers to address their specific needs.

Research from other states presents a compelling case for universal early screening, including: it takes 4x longer to intervene in 4th grade than in late kindergarten; with early identification and prevention programs, the number of children who are placed in special education can be reduced by up to 70% (it costs 3x more to serve a student in special education than in general education); and 90% of children with reading difficulties will achieve grade level in reading if they receive the right help before the end of 1st grade.⁶ Mississippi has seen great success since implementing its 2013 Early Reading Law (which includes early identification and support), moving from ranking as one of the lowest literacy rates in the country to now meeting national level for students in grade four and showing steady improvements yearly- despite the state’s economic challenges.⁷

HawaiiKidsCAN has the following recommendations for amendments:

⁴ <https://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/parents/learn-about-dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia/debunking-common-myths-about-dyslexia#:~:text=It%20is%20one%20of%20the,may%20experience%20it%20more%20severely.>

⁵ <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/dyslexia-guidelines.pdf>

⁶ <https://23890d.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Universal-Screening-for-Children-at-Risk-for-Dyslexia-3.6.2023.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2023/7/18/23799124/mississippi-miracle-test-scores-naep-early-literacy-grade-retention-reading-phonics/>

- **Explicitly Define Dyslexia in Law:** Modify the definition of “dyslexia” slightly to be more aligned with the definition from the International Dyslexia Association, as follows⁸: “a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.”
- **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** Include a process for schools to “implement training programs for educators to understand better and recognize dyslexia and provide ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance teachers’ ability to support students with dyslexia.”
- **Implementation of Data Collection and Reporting Protocols:** Include that schools “establish a system for collecting data on students with dyslexia, regularly report on the effectiveness of dyslexia interventions and programs, and conduct a periodic review of policies and practices.” Schools should also “include dyslexia-specific interventions in Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and ensure that students with dyslexia receive appropriate accommodations and support.”
- **Raise Dyslexia Awareness and Engagement Amongst Stakeholders:** Include a process for the Department of Education to “create protocols, workshops, and resources that foster collaboration between schools and parents to share information about dyslexia; allocate resources, including funding and personnel, to implement dyslexia-related programs and services; consider the potential of partnerships with dyslexia organizations for additional support; and implement public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and increase understanding of dyslexia.”

Literacy is a fundamental human right, and this bill is a step in the right direction.

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Miyashiro
Founding Executive Director
HawaiiKidsCAN

⁸ <https://dyslexiaida.org/definition-of-dyslexia/>

Co-signers



Name	Email	Zip code	Organization
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Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition
2444 Dole Street, Bachman Annex 6
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822

February 5, 2024

Committee on Education
Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice-Chair

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice-Chair La Chica, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition supports the intention of HB1657 and offers comments and a suggestion.

The Literacy Coalition appreciates the legislature's attention to the early identification of students falling behind in reading, including those who may be dyslexic. Early identification and intervention for students who are struggling is of utmost importance, including determining whether students are dyslexic. Students who are struggling with dyslexia can often be helped by the implementation of specific interventions to help them overcome it.

Collectively, we have a responsibility to ensure that teachers, especially those in early education classrooms between pre-K and third grade are using best practices in teaching reading. This means that teacher preparation programs should be aligning their programs with the research consensus, and that professional development for early education teachers on literacy assessments and strategies must be universally available.

Assessment is important, but it's also vital that we carefully choose tools that do not create redundancy and additional burden on teachers and administrators. This means choosing a screener that is sensitive to the risk factors of dyslexia, not necessarily requiring an additional screener. When schools understand what areas students are struggling in, they are best positioned to provide interventions that match those deficits.

Additionally, we would like to suggest the following change to maintain the purpose of the bill.

Page 3

Line 8 “those at risk of having a ~~specific learning disability, such as~~”

Line 9 “dyslexia, so as to provide for identification of and support for”

We will defer to HDOE regarding the implementation and provisions of the sections of the bill that are pertinent to the department. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

The Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition is a collaborative group of education leaders who have made a collective commitment to promoting literacy throughout the state of Hawai'i. Together, we have developed the Hawai'i State Literacy Plan, an aspirational document that focuses on providing research-informed strategies to improve literacy for Hawaii's people.

Kim Guieb-Kang on behalf of the Hawai'i State Literacy Coalition

LATE

HB-1657

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 2:41:08 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Linee Reeves	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a parent of a child with a learning disability, I strongly endorse the proposed bill mandating universal screenings for early-grade students. There are benefits of this crucial initiative:

Early identification matters: identifying children early allows timely intervention equipping educators to intervene effectively to support struggling students. Universal screenings help to identify students at risk for dyslexia, a neurobiological disorder affecting reading and language processing. With efficient and targeted intervention using universal screening tools the results will guide evidence-based intervention strategies tailored to each child’s unique learning needs. Universal screening is pivotal for literacy development. By screening children early, we can address learning disabilities promptly and prevent long-term academic challenges. I support and prioritize early identification to empower parents, support educators, and for the benefit of students to thrive academically and emotionally.

Mahalo,

Linee Reeves

HB-1657

Submitted on: 2/5/2024 6:32:26 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jenna Nguyen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 5th, 2024



To: Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Education

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

From: Jenna Nguyen

Subject: Support of House Bill 1657, Relating to Education

Aloha, my name is Jenna Nguyen, a student attending Kalaheo High School. I ask that you vote in favor of House Bill 1657. Without establishing educational support for our keiki early in their life, we risk their chances of a stable future in both school and daily life.

Hawaii is lacking in its education system and proficiency levels. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 35% of Hawaii students performed at or above the NAEP Proficiency Level as of 2022. This number is devastatingly low, given the leniency for averages. Students who struggle in Hawaii's education system will struggle even more with the education systems in the mainland, whose students are their competitors in colleges, scholarship contests, etc. Our noncompetitive education system gives students in Hawaii a major setback. We need HB1657 to be passed. It not only encourages student education, it also is able to benefit more students early on. The National Center for Biotechnology Information says “concerned parents with personal resources were the only way in which children with dyslexia could receive support.” A universal screening will allow for a free, non time-consuming alternative to identifying dyslexia in children. With the passing of HB1657, we will be able to support a wider range of students from early on and increase Hawaii’s proficiency rates, in order to encourage the need to improve the curriculums we teach our keiki.

On a separate note, the British Dyslexia Association says “dyslexia can affect memory, organization, time-keeping, concentration, multi-tasking and communication.” It is not simply limited to a learning disability; dyslexia impacts daily life as well. Yale Dyslexia’s statistics say 20% of the population are dyslexic, and dyslexia makes up 80-90% of those with learning disabilities. Two out of ten people have dyslexia, and each one of those people are affected by

anywhere from one to all of BDA's listed symptoms. HB1657 will support dyslexic people from an early age, allowing them to learn how to overcome their symptoms at an earlier start.

It is our duty to aid students to the best of our ability in order to open the pathway to their success. This bill can be highly beneficial and impactful if passed, however I suggest altering the bill to include support for other learning disabilities as well. Understandably, many of the bill's addressed components fall in with other learning disabilities, but the bill's main focus lies in dyslexia rather than a variety of disabilities, such as ADHD. Making this bill cover a wider range of disabilities will accommodate more students and thus positively impact more students in their journey through life.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope my voice will aid in the passing of this bill.

LATE

To: Hawaii Legislature
- the correct Representatives and Senators -

It's due by 2pm tomorrow (5 February 2024)

Please see 'attachment'

ALOHA

During my school years - back in the early 1960's - terminologies of Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities didn't exist.

I've faltered - though resilience as got me through life...

I support HB 1657 and SB 2510 to Advocate for today's young children to get the help they need; through DOE Screenings from kindergarten through fifth grade, for Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities

As a senior citizen and educator - I continue to navigate life being dyslexic. Today's Children Our Children deserve better -

Working in an elementary school, I can see the need for HB 1657 and SB 2510.

Also, being dyslexic - I am not able to navigate the email process to submit testimony to the state of Hawaii Legislature.

It's impossible for me.

Hopefully, with Your help - this simple testimony support - may get where it needs to go to count FOR passage of these two bills.

MAHALO Plenty !!!

Sincerely,

Bonnie

recallbherenow@hotmail.com

808-822-5547

PO Box 30848
Anahola, Hawai'i 96703-0848

LATE

LATE

HB-1657

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 10:49:15 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/6/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Montgomery	Renaissance Learning	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 6, 2024

The Honorable Justin Woodson

Chair, House Education Committee

Written Testimony in Support for HB 1657

Screening for Risk of Dyslexia, Reading Difficulties, and Proper Interventions

Dear Chairman Woodson,

My name is Scott Montgomery, Vice President for Government Affairs for Renaissance Learning. We write today in support of HB 1657 and the adoption of universal screening tools for students in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade to identify and support students at risk of Dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

Renaissance Learning agrees that universal screenings should be considered part of a state’s comprehensive instructional strategy and should be used by educators like other types of formative and summative assessments: to inform individualized instruction, measure a pupil’s progress, identify pupil learning needs, and enable parents and educators to discuss pupil needs in a more informed way.

Renaissance and other early literacy research is clear and unequivocal—early identification and interventions are critical in the identification and prevention of reading problems (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Screening tools support efforts to accurately identify students who are at risk for developing reading difficulties and interventions with evidence-based early literacy instructional strategies and materials improves literacy outcomes for pupils at risk of, and with, reading difficulties, including dyslexia. Dyslexia is the most common learning disability; however, many pupils on the dyslexia spectrum struggle every day to read without proper identification and support. By screening all pupils for risk of reading difficulties early, the State of Hawai‘i can help families and educators achieve the best learning and life outcomes for all pupils and close academic achievement gaps.

Assessments like Renaissance’s Star Early Literacy assessment – a brief standards-based test (completed by students, on average, in less than 10 minutes) – of early literacy (22 items) development that measures student performance throughout grades K–3 and provides teachers with valuable information about early skill acquisition along a continuum of expectations.

Additionally, data from Star Early Literacy helps teachers intervene at the start of a student’s formal learning, which is especially helpful for students who enter schooling lacking the literacy experiences and foundational skills that help to ensure early literacy development takes root.

Across the country, states, school districts, and local schools have benefited from the data and actionable information provided by early diagnostic assessments like Star. We believe HB 1657 provides those same opportunities for Hawaiian students by ensuring that all public schools will conduct such screenings and therefore identify students at risk of having a specific learning disability, such as Dyslexia, to provide for identification of and support for these students.

Renaissance Learning supports the Legislature’s desired outcome of providing such screenings to the students Hawai‘i and stands ready to support your work in any way possible.

Sincerely,

Scott Montgomery

Vice President, Government Affairs

Renaissance Learning

scott.montgomery@renaissance.com

Phone: 319.400.6468

