

May 2, 2023

Testimony in **Support** of LD 1526, An Act to Provide Grants to Support Reading Proficiency Programming in Schools.

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and the distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs.

My name is Zach Cronin and I am a 7th grade student, hockey player, lacrosse player and I have dyslexia. When I was in early elementary school I couldn't read. I felt pushed away and different from my peers. I remember working with the special education teacher and she said things like "another student is doing way better than you and you just need to try harder." My third grade teacher when I asked to listen on tape said "It's third grade you should be able to read this by now." I felt like I was failing everything.

My Mom advocated for me to get a special tutor. Miss Stacy is a specialist in Orton Gillingham. She taught me how to use word attack skills, phonics, and how to split words in syllables even if it doesn't make sense. She taught me how to read. Today I read slower than my peers but I can read. And honestly, not that much slower. In a class time they can read 21 pages at the most and I can read 13. I am an honors student today.

Everyone is not going to have a Mom to advocate and schools don't know how to teach reading for all kids. 1 in 5 kids have dyslexia. Only a few of those kids might get special education. They need their general teacher to know how to teach them to read. It shouldn't require a Mom knowing what to do for a kid to know they are smart and can learn how to read.

Thank you and I'm willing to take questions.