

March 2, 2025

Dear Chair Cwodsinski and members of the Senate Education Policy Committee,

My name is Kimberly Zitek, and I am a concerned parent residing in Shakopee, Minnesota. My child currently attends school in the Shakopee District. I am writing to respectfully request your support for SF1842, which mandates two hours of dyslexia-focused professional development for teacher licensure.

My own struggles with dyslexia during my schooling prompted me to seek information regarding potential dyslexia in my daughter when she began Pre-K. Unfortunately, I received inadequate guidance from school staff. Even in kindergarten, her reading and writing difficulties were dismissed. Consequently, I had to independently research and fund a private evaluation for my daughter, a costly endeavor. The school social worker's dismissal of the possibility of dyslexia was disheartening. After securing a private diagnosis, we had to advocate persistently for a district evaluation, eventually resulting in an IEP. We are fortunate that my daughter has had two teachers with LETRS training and a commitment to professional development. They have done all of this training on their own. But my daughter's three SPED teachers that she has had through the last 3 years have asked me for more information on dyslexia as they say they have never had any training on it. Because of their lack of knowing how to support my daughter we have had to hire outside resources to help her. I am concerned about the district's apparent lack of support for dyslexia training, as inquiries regarding teacher and staff training have gone unanswered. This prompted my husband to run for and win a seat on the school board this year. I believe that mandatory training is necessary to ensure that our teachers receive the necessary support. I strongly urge you to support this bill to ensure that all students have access to educators equipped to assist them.

Dyslexic students thrive when their teachers understand their unique challenges. Without this understanding, students are often unfairly blamed for their struggles instead of receiving the necessary support. I urge you to support this vital step to help the estimated 20% of students who are dyslexic.

Sincerely,
Kimberly Zitek
School District 720
District 54A