

Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee

Tricia Melillo 271-3077

SB 454, relative to the screening date for dyslexia.

Hearing Date: January 21, 2020

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Kahn, Dietsch, Morgan, Ward and Starr

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Bill Analysis: This bill changes the date for screening for dyslexia.

Sponsors:

Sen. Bradley

Rep. Rooney

Rep. Hayward

Who supports the bill: Senator Bradley

Who opposes the bill: Representative Karen Ebel, Bebe Casey DDNH, Dale Vincent, Aileen Cormier NHIDA, Bonnie Dunham

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Bradley

- This bill was drafted from a request by a constituent who is a teacher in Milton.
- The information that she gleaned from students was that February was a better time to do the screening.
- Senator Kahn asked if he thought it was because it would give the student more time?
- Senator Bradley replied that is his understanding. A later screening date would give the students more class time with the teachers which may result in more positive screenings.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

BeBe Casey – Decoding Dyslexia NH

- She is the co-founder of a grassroots organization called Decoding Dyslexia.
- She also helped draft the original dyslexia law with Representative Karen Ebel.
- Her son has dyslexia.
- The legislature put together a Committee to Study Policies Needed For Dyslexic Students in 2015.
- She spent months listening to multiple experts who all agreed that screening early was most beneficial to the student.
- November 30th is the date the legislators came up with to screen.
- This screening is testing for risk factors for reading difficulty not diagnosing dyslexia.
- There was a dyslexia resource manual put together for schools to help them understand the risk factors and best practices.

- If data from the baseline screening has even one indicator, the school district will start the process of intervention.
- Throughout the year there are frequent screens to monitor progress.
- The administration benchmark for screening is three times a year for students that are at risk and frequent monitoring of progress.
- If the students are not tested until February, it wastes six months of screening time.
- All kids are not coming in to school right at kindergarten and the earlier they are screened the quicker they can get intervention services.

Dale Vincent

- She is here testifying as a parent of a child with dyslexia.
- Her daughter was in school an entire year before she got screened and even then no one knew she had a difficulty reading until she failed to perform academically.
- She lost her entire kindergarten year due to the absence of early screening.
- If this bill passes and the screening is not done until February, other children will lose out as well.
- With her daughter she had to use private sources for tutoring and testing, and she is now a successful woman working for Tesla.
- She believes that it is really unconscionable to push screening to the end of the year when it will delay intervention for students that are at risk.

Aileen Cormier – NH International Dyslexia Association

- Her association helps to remediate dyslexia and tutors' children at no cost.
- They also train teachers and parents how to remediate dyslexia.
- This screening is not a test to diagnose dyslexia, it just identifies a child that is at risk for reading difficulty.
- She compares this bill to a newborn not being seen by a pediatrician until they are six months old.
- It is a simple screening that is cost effective for schools.
- Some kids may not have dyslexia they just need a little extra boost in reading.
- The screening identifies their weakness so the teacher can focus on those and get the student help.
- There is a fiscal aspect to this bill. The earlier you remediate reading difficulties the less you will spend later on reading and dyslexia programs.
- The other aspect to consider is teacher training. She has trained teachers, but most teachers do not know how to address dyslexia. Schools need to see that teachers are trained and until they do that, they need the early screening tool. It is much easier to address reading difficulties in elementary school than it is in high school.
- Senator Ward asked if she was talking about screening every child?
- Ms. Cormier stated that any child that enters kindergarten or 1st grade is screened.
- Senator Kahn confirmed that current statute requires that all children get screened.

TJM

Date Hearing Report completed: January 21, 2020