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To The Interim committee on Dyslexia & Related Disorders,

Due to family circumstances I am unable to attend today, and request that my written testimony be put into the records of your hearing. I have two children with dyslexia, whom attend Austin ISD, and I would like to share with you my experiences.

With my first child, my daughter, who was in Early Childhood classes because of her early dyslexic symptom of delayed speech development, I pushed long and hard (1 ½ years) to have the school district evaluate her. They did not; telling me that they usually waited until third grade, or later, to do testing. I was very frustrated that my bright 1st grader was not learning to read and was beginning to hate school at such a tender age. I paid dearly out of my own pocket to have her evaluated at Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin (SRLC) and their testing discovered her to be clearly dyslexic. With the 12-page report they gave me, and the subsequent support of the elementary school administration, my daughter was put into Special Education For Children With Learning Disabilities In Reading, so that she could receive interventions. My relief quickly turned to dismay when I found out from the Resources (Special Ed) teacher that there were no specific dyslexia interventions at our school to give to her. I then enrolled her into the after-school "Take Flight" classes at Scottish Rite (a 44 mile daily round-trip commute from our neighborhood). My daughter, who finished 1st grade at a DRA reading level of 4, came up 22 DRA reading levels during 2nd grade, her first year at SRLC. In third grade, her 2nd and final year at SRLC, she was Commended on the Reading section of TAKS (without using the Dyslexia bundle) and on her Reading Benchmark that same year she scored 100%. This is the same child who came home weeping from school every day in 1st grade and thinking that she was "stupid".

Her Resources and classroom teachers were amazed; they'd never seen a child come up so quickly. They both wanted to know how SRLC had done it. The Resources teacher said that she had no knowledge to aid her in helping children like my daughter and that she would love to be able to give that same gift to the other children she works with. Sadly, she has not been given such training. It is incredible to think that a school with over 1000 students does not have a single teacher who can administer an effective dyslexia program, but that appears to be the norm in AISD schools, based on my own experience and the feedback that I have received from other parents.

When my son was also diagnosed with dyslexia, I immediately also signed him up for the same program at SRLC and after his first year he has also soared and can now read on level with many of his classmates. What I have learned from this is that, with a proven intervention program, children will succeed, regain their self-worth, and keep up with their class.

I also volunteer at our school, Oak Hill Elementary, in Reading Rangers and in Partners In Reading through Partners In Education, and I see all of these wonderful kids who are struggling, as my children did, but, because their parents don't know about, or have the resources to find interventions outside of AISD, and because AISD has no effective intervention program, their children are failing, falling behind, and losing their self esteem. Because AISD does not have a district-wide dyslexia program for these children, they are the ones who will bring down the TAKS scores and will likely become our future dropouts. IT IS NOT FAIR. *All* children with dyslexia, and it is estimated by Dr. Sally Shaywitz that it could be twenty percent of our population, ought to have effective and early interventions! *Please* make this a mandate for all of the school districts in Texas; we should not allow these precious children to be left behind.

Thank you for your hard work and consideration.