



Maryland Independent College
and University Association

Written Support

House Ways and Means Committee

Senate Bill 126 (Hester and Zucker) State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance

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January 27, 2021

On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the 65,600 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of *Senate Bill 126 State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance*. This legislation would create a stakeholder advisory group to develop a reading and dyslexia handbook to guide local school systems in the implementation of best practices for early literacy and dyslexia. The completed handbook must be made available to the public and updated periodically.

Several MICUA member institutions have a teaching or education program that prepares K12 educators. As such, we take great interest in the work of the stakeholder advisory group being established under this bill. As an example, Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU), is dedicated to preparing teaching professionals through a graduate program. NDMU offers a new graduate Dyslexia Certificate Program in partnership with Jemicy School, nationally known for educating students with dyslexia and other related language-based learning disabilities. Participants who have completed the 12-credit program are prepared for the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) certification exam. As referenced in NDMU's testimony, the College is committed to supporting the implementation of SB 126 by recommending a faculty member with expertise in early literacy and dyslexia for appointment on the stakeholder advisory group.

For all of these reasons, MICUA requests a favorable Committee report for Senate Bill 126.



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OF MARYLAND
UNIVERSITY

Bill Number: SB126

Position: Letter of Support

Bill Title: State Department of Education - Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices - Guidance and Assistance

Committee(s): Ways and Means / Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Bill Hearing Date(s): January 20 & 27, 2021

In May 2015, the Maryland General Assembly authorized a Task Force to Study the Implementation of a Dyslexia Education Program (HB278, 2015). The final report of the Task Force (2016)¹ stated that “*across the State, many teachers report limited knowledge regarding dyslexia and practices that produce results for this population of learners*” and recommended that curriculum and instructional strategies utilized in teacher preparation programs be reviewed and revised to include Structured Literacy and targeted evidenced-based intervention practices. In response to the report’s findings, starting in spring 2018, Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU) began offering a new graduate Dyslexia Certificate Program in partnership with Jemicy School, nationally known for educating for students with dyslexia and other related language-based learning disabilities. This twelve-credit program, which also addresses dysgraphia and dyscalculia, aligns with the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading developed by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). Upon completion, the candidates are prepared to take the IDA certification exam for classroom educators. The program has now expanded to include teacher cohorts in several large school districts in Maryland and incorporated as a master’s program concentration area.

NDMU supports SB126. Our work with teachers throughout Maryland shows that there is an ongoing need for them to have access to current resources and evidence-based practices related to early literacy and dyslexia. The proposed handbook, coupled with professional development, would provide classroom teachers with the knowledge and skills to instruct the struggling readers more effectively in their classrooms. NDMU would be willing to recommend and support a NDMU faculty member with expertise in early literacy and dyslexia be considered for appointment to the advisory group.

NDMU requests the committee return a favorable report on Senate Bill 126.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Greg FitzGerald, Chief of Staff, at (410) 532-5109 or gfitzgerald@ndm.edu, or Dr. Kathryn Doherty, Dean of the School of Education, at (410) 532-4597 or kdoherly1@ndm.edu.

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¹ <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/021600/021654/20170046e.pdf>