



TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Members, Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Katie Fry Hester

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: January 27, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 126 – *State Department of Education – Early Literacy and Dyslexia Practices – Guidance and Assistance*

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 126.

The Maryland General Assembly passed the Ready to Read bill in 2019 (*see Senate Bill 734: Education – Students with Reading Difficulties – Screenings and Intervention*), which initiated screening protocols for early literacy difficulties in young students. Senate Bill 126 is a follow-up to the Ready to Read bill, requiring the Maryland State Department of Education to establish a stakeholder advisory group charged with developing a reading and dyslexia handbook. The reading and dyslexia handbook would provide consistent and current best practices on reading screening, instruction, and interventions. The reading and dyslexia handbook would be available to students, parents, teachers, and the public.

Without a definitive resource on reading and dyslexia practices, parents and educators are often unsure how to determine what is contributing to a student's challenges and/or how to best assist the student. Figuring out if children suffer from ADHD, anxiety, or learning disabilities in the classroom through observation is a difficult task, particularly when teachers have not been trained to spot the signs of dyslexia. Even for teachers with many years' experience, the behavior resulting from these struggles is so similar they can overlap and be difficult to distinguish. There is a considerable number of children with ADHD who also suffer from dyslexia. In many of those children, their diagnosis of dyslexia has not been discovered, or they have been misdiagnosed as only having ADHD.

Passage of Senate Bill 126 will ensure that there is a universally available resource for both parents and teachers. The reading and dyslexia handbook will support all struggling readers, whether they have fallen behind due to a learning disability or due to challenging learning circumstances during the pandemic. It will help improve educational outcomes for all readers and specifically children with dyslexia. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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