

For Immediate Release

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Advocates to Gather in Annapolis Feb. 8 to Support Legislation to Help At-Risk Readers Before They Fall Behind

Focus on Early Identification & Effective Reading Instruction

Annapolis, MD (February 5, 2018): Bills introduced last week will help students who struggle with reading. **Senate Bill 548 (Sen. Conway) and House Bill 910 (Dels. Kaiser/Luedtke)** require school districts to screen all students for risks of reading failure before they fall behind. The early-reading screening bills include screening components for each grade level, require evidence-based reading instruction, teacher training, parental notification, and reporting. Early identification and intervention can prevent the trauma of reading failure and the necessity of special education.

House Bill 493 (Del. Stein) and Senate Bill 638 (Sen. Conway) require pre-service teacher candidates to pass a foundations of reading exam in order to teach in Maryland. Seventeen states currently require such a test—the bills would have Maryland go a step further and require pre-service coursework to include the essential components of foundational reading instruction.

Marla Migdal, former teacher with Frederick County Public Schools and a parent advocate for Decoding Dyslexia Maryland, offered her reasons to support the bills: “I feel helpless and angry thinking about spending thousands on student loans to earn a Graduate Degree in Special Education, only to find out that I was not prepared to identify and teach students how to read. Most teachers are like me – we do not have solid foundational skills in reading because our university coursework failed to provide us with these skills. I personally would like to send my university an invoice and get my money back.”

Parents, students, and teachers will gather in Annapolis **Thursday Feb. 8**, to “Speak Out” about reading instruction in Maryland located in Room 180 in the House Office Building from 8:30am-1pm. Participants include advocates from Baltimore County and City, Howard, Montgomery, Prince Georges, and Frederick Counties. Literacy experts from the [National Center on Improving Literacy](http://NationalCenteronImprovingLiteracy.org), [Read by 4th](http://Readby4th.org), and [Baltimore County Public Schools](http://BaltimoreCountyPublicSchools.org) will share best practices for grade level reading.

More than 60% of Maryland students read below grade level and do not graduate with the literacy skills needed for college and careers. Students who are not proficient in reading by the end of third grade will be poor readers in tenth grade. – most of these students will require remedial education in reading/math before they are admitted to credit-bearing courses.

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Decoding Dyslexia Maryland (DD-MD) is an unincorporated, grassroots nonprofit organization powered by parents, teachers and students who advocate for effective reading and writing instruction in Maryland Public Schools. More Info: <https://www.decodingdyslexiamd.org/>