

## ABOUT DECODING DYSLEXIA MARYLAND



Decoding Dyslexia Maryland's (DDMD) mission is to raise dyslexia awareness, to support families with reading difficulties like dyslexia and to advocate for solutions with Maryland policy makers. Founded in late 2012, DDMD is part of a national, parent and grassroots network that includes 50 states and 5 Canadian Provinces. DD-MD members represent **hundreds of families, educators and related professionals** from cities and towns across Maryland, including but not limited to:

Aberdeen	Charlotte Hall	Havre de Grace	Ridge
Annapolis	Chestertown	Laurel	Rising Sun
Baltimore City	Crofton	Leonardtwn	Rockville
Bel Air	Cumberland	Lutherville	Silver Spring
Bethesda	Easton	Northeast	Timonium
Bowie	Ellicott City	Ocean City	Towson
Brandywine	Hagerstown	Reisterstown	Westminster

DDMD hosts an annual Dyslexia Advocacy Day in Annapolis where students and families from across the state advocate for dyslexia. DDMD members participated on the Dyslexia Education Task Force (enacted 2015/2016) and helped prepare the report that includes findings and recommendations on Best Practices for Dyslexia and specifics on how to create a Dyslexia Pilot Program in a Maryland public school.

### Why Should Policy Makers and Educators Care about Reading Reform?

The costs of reading failure are extraordinary and these costs begin with emotional, financial and downstream socio-economic impacts on individuals and communities (and budgets). Young students believe they are stupid – they read less and struggle more than their peers; and those without a support system at home often end up as a statistic in the school-to-prison pipeline. Some academics like to say that poor readers “lack motivation” and just need to read more; but if you talk to parents they will tell you their children work harder than their peers. Motivation is one symptom of a crisis in Maryland's teacher preparation programs. Teachers often report that they “never learned about dyslexia and they don't know how to teach struggling students to read.” **What is really needed?** A change in the approach and practice of teacher education in reading instruction in Maryland university teacher preparation programs, along with state and district-wide professional learning that focuses on the science of reading and the principles of effective instruction.

### Policy Goals

- Universal definition of dyslexia in the state education code
- Mandatory teacher training on dyslexia, its warning signs and appropriate interventions
- Universal early screening for dyslexia and reading difficulties
- Effective “structured literacy” instruction for dyslexia that can be accessed by both general and special education students
- Access to appropriate “assistive technologies” and accommodations in the public school setting

*Professional preparation programs have a responsibility to teach a defined body of knowledge, skills and abilities that are based on the best research in the field. This is no less important in reading than it is in medicine or the law.* (American Federation of Teachers: Reading is Rocket Science, 1999)