

Congressman Bill Cassidy, M.D.

**Testimony- The Science of Dyslexia Hearing
Committee on Science, Space & Technology
September 18, 2014**

Thank you Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson for inviting me to speak and hosting this bipartisan hearing bringing attention to the science of dyslexia.

Twenty percent of the United States population is dyslexic. This disability affects as many as 10 million children across the country — boys and girls from all ethnic, socioeconomic and geographic regions of our country.

It is an important issue for me, both as a parent and as a Congressman.

A couple of years ago, my youngest daughter was diagnosed with dyslexia. Prompted by concerns about my daughter and my constituents' children, I set out to learn as much as I could about dyslexia and was amazed at how much is known and yet, far too often, not incorporated into public policy and education.

As a result, I co-founded the bipartisan Congressional Dyslexia Caucus and chair it with Congresswoman Brownley. The purpose of the caucus is to educate other Members of Congress and advance policies to break down barriers faced by dyslexics. I firmly believe that by raising awareness of dyslexia we can change the way we educate our children and assist millions of children to get on the path to success.

Part of this effort is a resolution I introduced along with Congresswoman Brownley. Our resolution urges the House of Representatives to call on schools along with state and local educational agencies to address the implications that dyslexia has on students. We now have over 100 Members of Congress cosponsoring this resolution.

Dyslexia robs individuals of their ability to read quickly and automatically and to retrieve spoken words easily but it does not dampen their creativity and ingenuity. We know that many with dyslexia are among our brightest and most successful. A few examples include entrepreneurs such as Charles Schwab and the late Steve Jobs.

If dyslexia is identified in elementary school and the appropriate resources are given to these children, America can produce more teachers, more scientists and more entrepreneurs.

Science shows the reading pathway in the brain of those who are dyslexic is different. MRI's show a specific disruption of the reading system. Those affected need an evidence based curriculum to address this reading disruption. Unless accommodations are made; curriculums and trained teachers are applied that correspond to the science of dyslexia, children will languish in the classroom. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work.

For those with money, there are excellent schools in some areas of the country where your child will learn to read and have all the opportunities reading allows. If a family cannot afford a \$10,000 to \$50,000 annual tuition, the option is typically a traditional public school in which dyslexics are "mainstreamed", which is to say, they likely will not receive the remediation they need.

So I applaud schools and educators who have embraced science by providing students with the proper educational environment and curriculum that will enable them to thrive personally and academically.

There are schools in Louisiana, like Louisiana Key Academy in Baton Rouge and the Max Charter School in Thibodaux, that specialize in teaching dyslexic students. But these schools are too few and far between. We need more schools to embrace and replicate this model so students can reach their full potential.

I believe we can come together on behalf of the children we love and the nation we serve and work in a bipartisan and bicameral capacity. Greater strides need to be made in ensuring that every dyslexic child and adult has a chance to read, to learn, to demonstrate, and to realize his or her full potential.

Thank you again for holding this hearing and giving the science behind dyslexia the attention it deserves. Hopefully, our work with the resolution, the caucus, and this hearing will have a positive impact on society and everyone striving to learn with dyslexia.

Thank you.