

Good afternoon, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Stacey Tie, and I serve as the Secretary of Special Education Equity for Kids and a professional special education advocate here in Connecticut. I will address two issues: CT-SEDS and Right to Read.

I have previously testified on the deeply flawed CT-SEDS system and its negative impact on teachers, students, and families. We have provided you with a growing list of issues that we have shared with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), many of which remain unaddressed. Right now, I can think of at least five cases in my current caseload where school teams have submitted tickets to the state for technical assistance—and we are still waiting for resolutions. In at least one case, a family has been waiting for over a month.

The current system requires districts to submit a ticket to CSDE and simply wait. This is unacceptable. It leaves IEPs in limbo, disputes unresolved, and families and school teams frustrated—further eroding trust in an already stressful process. Additionally, districts frequently cite limitations in the CT SEDS system and process to deprive students and parents of rights guaranteed under the IDEA and Section 504. To address these ongoing failures, we propose the following solutions:

1. **Adequate training for district staff** – CSDE must provide proper training so districts can resolve their own technical issues rather than relying solely on the state.
2. **Transparency in issue resolution** – CSDE should be required to publicly post common issues and their solutions, allowing districts and families to access information without delay.
3. **Creation of a task force** – A dedicated task force, with parent involvement, should investigate CT-SEDS' systemic issues and make recommendations for improvement.
4. **Accountability through audits** – CSDE must audit submitted tickets, identify recurring systemic issues, and take proactive steps to resolve them.
5. **Ensure parent/student rights are upheld despite system limitations-** CSDE must notify districts that any limitation does not excuse their adherence to federal and state laws. Any issues not able to be resolved within the CT SEDS system should be instructed to be documented in the IEP notes as a system limitation- not an agreement- and preservation of parents' rights should also be noted.

There exists an urgent need to enforce literacy regulations. The Legislature was right to prioritize literacy in Connecticut, and that commitment must continue. Despite existing regulations (CT 10-145i), which mandate that literacy specialists receive training in structured literacy, including practicum hours as well as in dyslexia identification and

remediation, many districts are either unaware of these requirements or ignore them, thereby depriving students of the literacy intervention they require. The state has taken no action to either ensure this law is known, nor enforce it, even when included in a state complaint or due process complaint.

We see the same disregard for the Right to Read law. In my own district, public meetings featured blatant discussions on how to sidestep compliance—going as far as spending money on legal advice to find ways around the law. Instead of ensuring students receive evidence-based reading instruction, districts rely on outdated, disproven methods and flawed assessments that misrepresent student progress.

The truth is simple: when a teacher instructs a child to read, they are actively remapping that child's brain. Yet, many districts continue using Teachers College Units of Study, a program that encourages guessing instead of actual reading. Slapping phonics onto a fundamentally flawed curriculum does not work. If a child is taught to guess words rather than engage with them, they will default to guessing—permanently hindering their reading development.

Right to Read will fail if it is not enforced.

Students with dyslexia will fail if literacy instructors are not properly trained.

This committee has the power to ensure Connecticut's literacy and special education policies are not just words on paper but real, enforceable standards that serve our students. I urge you to take action.

Thank you.