



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Dyslexia and the Need to READ: The Research Excellence and Advancements for Dyslexia Act

Chairman Smith: Welcome to today's hearing on H.R. 3033, the Research Excellence and Advancements for Dyslexia or READ Act, and the need to prioritize investments in dyslexia research conducted by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

I thank the many co-sponsors of the READ Act, especially former Science Committee Member, Representative Julia Brownley. We co-chair the bipartisan Congressional Dyslexia Caucus.

The caucus now has more than 100 Members of Congress. Together, we champion an increased public awareness of dyslexia, which affects an estimated 8.5 million school children and one in six Americans in some form.

Despite this huge number, many Americans remain undiagnosed, untreated and silently struggle at school or work. Too many children undiagnosed with dyslexia have difficulties in the classroom and sometimes drop out of school and face uncertain futures.

In a hearing last year on the science of dyslexia—one of the best-attended hearings of this Committee—experts testified how research in the area of neuroscience has led to practical ways of overcoming dyslexia and why more research was necessary.

Parents and teachers both must receive training in how to identify and test students for dyslexia. And the development of special curricula and educational tools can better enable students to read at their fullest potential.

The expert scientists at our hearing were clear: Dyslexia is the most common reading disability yet those who suffer from it often have normal or above-average intelligence. There is no proven correlation between dyslexia and intelligence.

Albert Einstein had dyslexia. And Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo, Nicholas Tesla, Thomas Edison and Steve Jobs are a few of the most recognized, brilliant innovators and inventors who overcame dyslexia.

With more research, greater awareness of how to identify dyslexic students, better curricula and more resources in the hands of parents, teachers, and students, we can develop the potential of many of those students who might become the next Einstein.

But if you can't read, it is hard to achieve. The READ Act is a step in the right direction to help those with dyslexia. The bill ensures that our children have the means to succeed.

The READ Act requires the National Science Foundation's (NSF) budget to include a specific line item for the Research in Disabilities Education program. The bill authorizes at least five million dollars annually for merit-reviewed, competitively awarded dyslexia research projects.

It uses funds already appropriated for the NSF Research and Related Activities account or the Education and Human Resources Directorate for these projects. It does not increase overall federal spending at the NSF.

The READ Act supports the practical research our expert witnesses said is most needed: early identification, professional training for teachers and administrators about dyslexia, and evidence-based educational tools and curricula. This is well within the scope of NSF's current science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education programs.

Our witnesses today have personal experiences with this issue. They routinely help students with dyslexia in the classroom and identify students who can benefit from additional instruction tailored for their unique situation.

They develop practical curricula to help children and adults with dyslexia. And some are parents of dyslexic students who want to make a difference not only in their children's lives but also in the lives of others.

October is Dyslexia Awareness Month. One year ago—in conjunction with our Science of Dyslexia hearing—the website Understood.org was launched. This website provides some tests for dyslexia and other resources.

Since Understood.org went live, over six million people have visited the website and it now attracts about one million different visitors each month.

After today's hearing, I would like to welcome members of the Committee to a reception in room 2325 down the hall being hosted by the National Center for Learning Disabilities along with the International Dyslexia Association, Decoding Dyslexia, the Learning Disabilities Association of America, Dyslexia Advantage, and Learning Ally.

For many people, dyslexia is considered a disability. But if we change the way we approach this subject, we can turn that disability into an opportunity for a brighter and more productive future.

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