

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

Resolution CYF-16-20

NATIONAL BLACK CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS STANDS WITH THOSE IMPACTED WITH DYSLEXIA AND CALLS FOR DYSLEXIA AND LOW LITERACY AWARENESS

WHEREAS, low literacy and functional illiteracy is reaching crisis levels within our society;

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy, 14 percent of the population can't read, 21 percent of adults in the U.S. read below a 5th grade level, and 19 percent of high school graduates can't read;

WHEREAS, literacy impacts both educational attainment as well as economic status;

WHEREAS, low literacy levels can be responsible for unemployment; poverty; academic failure; increased criminal behavior and poor health outcomes;

WHEREAS, Dyslexia is hereditary and the most common reading disability with approximately 1 out of every 5 people struggling with Dyslexia;

WHEREAS, more than 20 percent of the population is Dyslexic, yet many remain undiagnosed, untreated and struggle with the impact of their Dyslexia;

WHEREAS, according to the Yale Dyslexia and Creativity Center, "Dyslexia crosses racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines and with proper instruction and accommodations, it can be remediated. However, the diagnosis and treatment of Dyslexia remains elusive in public school environments, and even more so within urban school populations and African American communities."

WHEREAS, "More than 60 percent of urban school children do not graduate from high school, and 40 PERCENT of those who do graduate read at a 4th grade level.

WHEREAS, only 14 percent of African American 8th graders read at a proficient level;

WHEREAS, the high school dropout rate among African Americans is even more staggering with more than 60 percent dropping out in high school and, undiagnosed and untreated reading disabilities increase the risk of youth involvement in the juvenile justice systems, perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline; and

WHEREAS, children who cannot read are marginalized and left to struggle and ultimately risk falling completely through the cracks, dropping out of school and facing dismal futures.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) urges all of its members to work to increase the awareness of Dyslexia, and offer the African American community various screening and treatment options that have been researched and proven to improve Dyslexia to improve literacy rates;

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that it is imperative and appropriate that the NBCSL join the fight to raise awareness, support legislation, and the need for more appropriate accommodations for children of color to ensure that all African American children receive screening, tutoring and proper remediation services in school to combat this Civil Rights Issue of Our Time;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL stands with those impacted by Dyslexia and will urge all of its members to work to learn about Dyslexia and the impact on African Americans and the adverse effects of this untreated reading difference on their communities so that we may join together with other organizations local, state and federal to ensure that we close the reading achievement gap by advocating for teacher training, legislation (local, state, and federal) for the diagnosis and treatment of Dyslexia in the school setting, accommodations, and evidence based programming to address those classified as Dyslexic; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the president of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials as appropriate.

SPONSOR: Representative Mike Shelton (OK)

Committee of Jurisdiction: Children, Youth, and Families Policy Committee

Certified by Committee Co-Chairs: Representative Mike Shelton (OK) and Representative Raumesh Akbari (TN)

Ratified in Plenary Session: Ratification Date is December 4, 2015

Ratification is certified by: Senator Catherine Pugh (MD), President