

## **HB725** Education – Public Schools – Instruction in Print and Cursive Handwriting

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Position: Support

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Chairwoman Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the committee. My name is Liz Hembling. I am the mother of both a dyslexic and a Dysgraphic child. I am here in support of HB 725. There are many misconceptions about why the need for explicit handwriting instruction is so important. I hope today I can clarify why we need to bring handwriting back. Many of you know me from my years of advocating to improve literacy in the public school system. My dyslexic child was three grade levels behind in reading, unidentified as dyslexic in the general ed classroom, in Baltimore County Public Schools. I pulled her out and put her with specialized tutors in a school for dyslexic students, The Odyssey School. As many of you know, the education in these schools is very expensive, and as a result you learn a lot about what works regarding kids who struggle to read, write, and spell.

When my younger son started school I became alarmed. He reversed most of the alphabet, and struggled to write. His spelling was horrific, yet he could read. My son had dysgraphia. Because I was involved in the dyslexia world, I had him tutored at an early age. The tutors spent time working on his print writing, and then moved to cursive. The results were amazing. Not only did his writing look better, his spelling, and the content of his writing improved as well. In short, cursive had a massive impact on his academic achievement.

Why is this so? How could something as simple and rudimentary as cursive handwriting have such an impact on my child's academic success? There is a lot of research data that suggests that handwriting is connected to not only improvements in reading with kids, but also improves spelling, note taking, and retention of material. Handwriting is one of the first multi-sensory connections a child has to letters, how they are shaped, and what direction they face. Handwriting is an intimate connection to the basis of language. Writing letters with cursive allows for the letters to flow. You don't have a start stop with every letter; your pencil doesn't come off the page. This allows kids to blend sounds in letters and also focus more on their writing content.

We always taught handwriting. This is not something new. This is something that has incredible value and has been proven to help kids improve literacy and is linked to future academic achievement. There are so many studies on handwriting that I challenge you to start reading them. The impact of handwriting is stunning.

If Maryland decides to pass HB 725 we won't be the first state to require handwriting in schools. In fact we will be behind states like Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, Virginia, California, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas. There is recognition that this needs to be required by the state. We need to pass HB 725 so that all kids have the foundational skills via handwriting needed to improve their reading, writing, and spelling.

Thank you.