

Testimony: Theodore Hembling House Bill 725, 2020 Legislative Session

My name is Theodore Hembling, and I am 12 years old, and I have dysgraphia. I am in 6th grade at St. Joseph School in Cockeysville, Maryland. Before this year I was a student in Baltimore County Public Schools from kindergarten through 5th grade. My struggle with writing started when I was in 1st grade. I wrote my B's and D's backwards. I wrote the alphabet incorrectly. It was really difficult for me. When I was in 2nd grade, my teacher Ms. Bishop had us write in cursive. The lessons only lasted for that year. I continued to write in print and the quality of my writing suffered, and so did my spelling. My mom had me work with a tutor so that I could use cursive to write. Script was way easier than print for me because the alphabet was completely different from print, especially B's and D's. I stopped reversing them.

Later, I was diagnosed with dysgraphia. Dysgraphia is a writing disability that makes it really hard for someone to write. Not only do I have trouble forming letters on the page and spelling, but I have trouble getting my thoughts on paper.

Cursive is more important than just handwriting for me. It helps me take notes. I write flashcards and rewrite my notes to study for exams. Note taking by hand helps me do well on tests, as I can remember the material better. Because I have dysgraphia, I also struggle with spelling. I have had teachers comment that they see a big difference in my spelling when I write in cursive versus print. Now that I am in 6th grade, I need to do more writing, note taking, and I have to pass exams. If I didn't know cursive, I think I would struggle in school. Please pass bill HB 725 so that all kids in public school can benefit from being taught handwriting like I have. Thank you.