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**Article 8**

**More Changes Possible For Dyslexia-Screening Bill**

The [**Senate Education Committee**](https://www.gongwer-oh.com/directories/committee.cfm?committee=64302) Trackon Tuesday delayed a potential vote on a bill mandating dyslexia screenings in Ohio schools to give members more time to review late-arriving amendment proposals.

While the panel declined to advance the measure ([**HB 436**](https://www.gongwer-oh.com/legislation/bill.cfm?billid=2019HB43602)), it accepted a [**substitute version**](http://gongwer-oh.com/public/133/hb436sub.pdf) addressing the timing of those screens, among other issues.

Chair [**Sen. Peggy Lehner**](https://www.gongwer-oh.com/directories/bio.cfm?nameid=92102) (R-Kettering) said she is "very pleased" with the revised legislation, which represents a series of compromises.

The lawmaker said the substitute bill came in the wake of an interested party meeting a few weeks ago that initially left her feeling pessimistic about the measure's future.

"There seemed to be a tremendous amount of disagreement in the room, actually, as to where we were on this dyslexia bill," she said. "I was very discouraged coming out of that because we've worked long and hard … and it felt like we were just getting nowhere."

"But I started to sit down one on one with the people who were in that room and found a great deal of willingness to bend, to be flexible," she continued. "Everyone recognized they weren't going to get exactly what they wanted."

While Sen. Lehner and committee Vice Chair [**Sen. Andy Brenner**](https://www.gongwer-oh.com/directories/bio.cfm?nameid=131902) (R-Powell) introduced their own proposal ([**SB 102**](https://www.gongwer-oh.com/legislation/bill.cfm?billid=2019SB10202)) on the subject in early 2019, their attention has turned to the House-passed HB436 as the current session winds down.

Sen. Lehner said the latest version of HB436 would require dyslexia screenings for students to occur after the first semester of the kindergarten year and before the end of the first semester of first grade.

"That's to capture kids who really aren't available to screen on admission to kindergarten. They don't know what the first letter of the alphabet looks like, so how do you screen them?" she said.

Sen. Lehner said the one-year window included in the legislation represents the consensus of interested parties.

The substitute bill also changes the makeup of the committee established under the legislation to create a guidebook for schools to use to develop dyslexia screening and intervention programs.

"The original bill had the makeup of this committee entirely composed of people who, frankly, came to it with one perspective," she said. "And there are multiple perspectives on this bill, and we felt that the committee should reflect that."

Under the revised bill, the committee would feature:

* A school district superintendent.
* An elementary school principal.
* A classroom teacher.
* An educational service employee.
* A Department of Education employee.
* A parent of a child with dyslexia or an adult with dyslexia.
* An individual with experience in teacher-preparation programs.
* A board member of the International Dyslexia Association in Ohio.
* A school psychologist.
* A reading intervention specialist.
* A speech language pathologist.

The guidebook developed by the panel also must be filed in an electronic format to allow for timely updates under the substitute bill.

Sen. Lehner said the revised legislation also changes multiple implementation dates in recognition of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the potential for the bill to pass late in the legislative year.

[**Sen. Teresa Fedor**](https://www.gongwer-oh.com/directories/bio.cfm?nameid=49002) (D-Toledo) said the current version of HB436 represents a compromise among all parties, including minority party lawmakers.

"As a former classroom teacher, this may be one of the most important measures we have done for public education in Ohio," he said. "