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## **Superintendent Ybarra’s dyslexia bill introduced in House committee**

(BOISE) – A bill designed to detect and help Idaho children with dyslexia so they can learn to read on an even playing field with their peers will be scheduled for a House Education Committee hearing. The measure is a top legislative priority for Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra.

“It is essential that we detect dyslexia and other obstacles to learning as early as possible, so that kids who learn differently can still learn effectively, and so that our teachers have the tools they need to better understand and meet individual students’ needs,” said Superintendent Ybarra, who could not attend Tuesday’s print hearing because she was at a Land Board meeting. “Students often aren’t diagnosed with dyslexia until later grades, because as lessons become more complex, a bright student’s difficulty with deciphering written language becomes more apparent. And by then, teaching students to read for comprehension and even for enjoyment is an uphill battle.”

The proposed legislation would require screening Idaho students in kindergarten through third grade for characteristics of dyslexia, with appropriate instruction and intervention.

“This bill would provide additional support for students with dyslexia by implementing a dyslexia handbook, providing resources to teachers, providing training for teachers, and requiring that reading intervention plans include how those interventions will specifically address students with dyslexia,” said Deputy Superintendent for Communications and Policy Marilyn Whitney, who presented the bill to the House Education Committee Tuesday. Idaho is one of the few remaining states without dyslexia-specific legislation.

The legislation calls for the State Department of Education to designate a statewide dyslexia coordinator to provide school districts and charter schools across the state with support and resources for instruction and intervention. The SDE would also support local districts and charters in developing reading improvement plans for individual students with characteristics of dyslexia, and technical assistance.

Asked about the costs involved, Whitney noted that the bill outlines the plans as “subject to appropriation.” A fiscal note on the legislation estimated the salary and benefits for a full-time

dyslexia coordinator at \$97,000, with additional costs of up to \$2 million for instructional resources, training for teachers and instruction tailored to dyslexic students.

“It’s up to the Legislature how much you want to fund for this effort,” Whitney said.

Rep. Judy Boyle, R-Midvale, asked about a “competing bill” that had a print hearing in the Senate Education Committee Monday afternoon. The Senate bill includes no provision for funding.

House Education Committee Chairman Lance Clow, R-Twin Falls, said the House bill was submitted to Legislative Services in January, but the Senate bill was prepared and introduced first because the House Education Committee has a more flexible timeline for submitting bills. The two bills were developed separately, Clow said, and now the goal is to get dyslexia advocates and others together “to talk about the best route forward.”

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