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N.J. measure will benefit reading-disabled students

By The Associated Press

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TRENTON — Legislation inspired by an Ocean City girl who overcame severe dyslexia has been signed into law in New Jersey.

The measure creates a reading disabilities task force, which would help determine the best methods for diagnosing, treating and educating special needs students. The 13-member panel will include the state commissioners of education and human resources, four legislators and seven members of the public.

The bill also examines how state educational laws and regulations affect students with special reading and language skill needs.

The measure, signed Saturday by acting Gov. Stephen Sweeney, was inspired by Samantha Ravelli, an Ocean City Intermediate School student.

Ravelli has overcome severe dyslexia — a neurological disorder that makes it difficult to process language — through specialized reading courses. She started the courses about two years ago and has since made the honor roll and become more involved in student activities.

Proponents of the measure note that about 85 percent of New Jersey students now in special education classes are language- or reading-deficient and many don't receive proper training to overcome their problems. They say the measure will save money by reducing or eliminating unnecessary special education expenses.

Primary sponsors in the Assembly were Nelson Albano and Matthew W. Milam, both D-Cape May Court House, and Pamela R. Lampitt, D-Cherry Hill. Sen. Jeff Van Drew, D-Cape May County, sponsored the measure in the Senate.

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Stephen M. Sweeney