

HCS HB 106 -- LANGUAGE MILESTONES FOR HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN

SPONSOR: Barnes

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 15 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Regulatory Oversight" by a vote of 8 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 106.

This bill creates the "Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Act that requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to develop language developmental milestones from existing norms for children from birth to five years of age that have been identified as deaf or hard of hearing. DESE must develop a parental resource for monitoring and tracking children through the milestone stages toward American Sign Language (ASL) and English literacy. The components of the parental resource are outlined in the bill and DESE is required to disseminate the resource to parents of deaf and hard of hearing children.

The bill further requires that DESE select and disseminate tools or assessments for educators to assess the language and literacy development of children and the bill provides specific guidance on the format, age range of development, and appropriateness for such tools or assessments.

Children that are in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) that do not demonstrate progress in expressive and receptive language skills as measured by educator tools or assessments must have the lack of progress explained in detail with specific strategies, services, and programs recommended by the IEP or IFSP team.

The bill provides that DESE, in consultation with the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing shall establish an advisory committee of 17 members as outlined in the bill, before March 1, 2024, to solicit input from experts on the selection of the language development milestones as outlined in the bill. Before June 1, 2024 the committee will make recommendations to DESE, and DESE shall select the milestones before July 1, 2024.

Annually, starting with the 2024-25 school year DESE must produce an annual report that is specific to language and literacy development of children who are deaf or hard of hearing including, but not limited to, children who are deaf or hard of hearing and

have other disabilities, from birth to 5 years of age relative to peers who are not deaf or hard of hearing.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

**PROPONENTS:** Supporters say that having an established advisory board that will work along with DESE to develop specific standards and milestones for both ASL and spoken English in reading and writing for deaf children is very important. Many schools currently do not offer a choice for parents of deaf children and having established an early intervention that makes parents aware of the options is very beneficial as the development of language is key at young ages so that children can be fluent and not experience deprivation. The inclusion of so many on the advisory committee is a benefit as the more viewpoints and collaboration among the various affected individuals that can be garnered the better.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Barnes; Colleen Burdiss, Paraquad; Lesia Shelton; Paul Kiel, Missouri Association of the Deaf, Inc.; William Walker; Ante Colic; Becky Davis, Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Clark H. Corogenes; Delinda Brite; Paraquad; Kara Ross; Sonya Smith; Stacie Adrian; Stephanie Upton; Thomas Green; and Wendy Jensen.

**OPPONENTS:** Those who oppose the bill say that currently most of the provisions of the bill are in place and this is unnecessary duplication of existing practice. There are already early intervention programs federally required and Missouri provides information to a parents as soon as children are diagnosed with a hearing concern. The biggest need is for teachers that are able to teach both ASL and English and this bill does nothing to address this and may end up creating more barriers for schools and teachers.

Testifying in person against the bill were Betsy Moog Brooks; Heather Grantham; and Molly O'hara.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.