
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEALTH.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that children who are
2 deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind have the same ability and
3 capability to learn language as their peers who do not have a
4 similar disability. The ability and right to develop language,
5 are central to the human experience and necessary prerequisites
6 to literacy as well as cognitive, emotional, linguistic,
7 academic, and social growth and the chance for children to
8 evolve into healthy and productive members of society.

9 The legislature further finds that children who are deaf,
10 hard of hearing, or deaf-blind often begin kindergarten without
11 the necessary language skills to acquire the knowledge and
12 academic competencies that will allow them to be successful in
13 school and life.

14 The purpose of this Act is to:

15 (1) Establish an early learning acquisition program with
16 various services for children who are deaf, hard of
17 hearing, or deaf-blind within the department of health
18 to support age-appropriate language development for



- 1 children from birth to age three years who are deaf,
 2 hard of hearing, or deaf-blind;
- 3 (2) Establish a working group for the purposes of
 4 investigating issues related to resources and tools
 5 for parents of children who are deaf, hard of hearing,
 6 or deaf-blind and improvements on statewide system of
 7 services that support age-appropriate language
 8 development for children from birth to age five who
 9 are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind; and
- 10 (3) Appropriate funds for various positions to support the
 11 early language acquisition program and children from
 12 birth to age five who are deaf, hard of hearing, or
 13 deaf-blind.

14 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
 15 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
 16 and to read as follows:

17 "§321- Early language acquisition program for children
 18 who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. There is
 19 established within the department of health an early language
 20 acquisition program to support age-appropriate language
 21 development for children from birth to age three years who are



1 deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Program services may
2 include service providers and mentors of the deaf, hard of
3 hearing, or deaf-blind who use American Sign Language; service
4 providers and mentors of the deaf who use oral language;
5 American Sign Language teachers for families of young children;
6 family-to-family support; and training of early intervention
7 providers."

8 SECTION 3. (a) The department of health, department of
9 education, and executive office of early learning shall
10 establish and convene a working group for the purpose of making
11 recommendations to the legislature on issues related to
12 supporting age-appropriate development for children from birth
13 to age five years who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.
14 The working group may include the following members to be
15 selected by the director of health:

- 16 (1) One parent of a child aged five years or younger who
17 is deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind who uses
18 American Sign Language;
- 19 (2) One parent of a child aged five years or younger who
20 is deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind who uses oral
21 language;



- 1 (3) One parent of a child aged five years or younger who
2 is deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind who uses
3 cochlear implant device;
- 4 (4) One parent or teacher of a child aged five years or
5 younger who is deaf-blind who is familiar with the
6 language needs of a child who is deaf-blind;
- 7 (5) One credentialed teacher who uses American Sign
8 Language for children aged five years or younger who
9 are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind;
- 10 (6) One credentialed teacher who uses oral language for
11 children aged five years or younger who are deaf, hard
12 of hearing, or deaf-blind;
- 13 (7) One advocate for the teaching and use of American Sign
14 Language;
- 15 (8) One advocate for the teaching and use of oral
16 language;
- 17 (9) One early intervention specialist who works with
18 infants and toddlers using American Sign Language;
- 19 (10) One early intervention specialist who works with
20 infants and toddlers using oral language;



- 1 (11) The early intervention section supervisor or program
- 2 manager;
- 3 (12) One representative from the disability and
- 4 communication access board;
- 5 (13) One representative from the executive office of early
- 6 learning;
- 7 (14) One representative from the department of education;
- 8 (15) One representative from the English as a Second
- 9 Language community; and
- 10 (16) Other experts, including audiologists and speech
- 11 language pathologists, with knowledge of language
- 12 assessment and intervention for children who are deaf,
- 13 hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.

14 Working group members may include representation from each
15 of the counties of Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui and the city and
16 county of Honolulu.

- 17 (b) The working group shall examine the following:
- 18 (1) A resource guide for parents of children who are deaf,
- 19 hard of hearing, or deaf-blind that may include
- 20 milestones of age-appropriate language development,
- 21 websites related to deafness and hearing loss,



- 1 national and state organizations and resources for
2 families, terms and definitions related to deafness
3 and hearing loss, and communication choices;
- 4 (2) Tools used to assess and plan language development
5 services for children from birth to age five years who
6 are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind;
- 7 (3) The report of the department of health, department of
8 education, and executive office of early learning on
9 the statewide system of services that support age-
10 appropriate language development for children from
11 birth to age five years who are deaf, hard of hearing,
12 or deaf-blind;
- 13 (4) Improvements concerning the statewide system of
14 services that support age-appropriate language
15 development for children from birth to age five years
16 who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind; and
- 17 (5) Improvements concerning the transition of children at
18 age three years from the department of health early
19 intervention services to the department of education
20 services.



1 (c) All activities of the departments of health and
2 education in implementing this section shall be consistent with
3 federal law regarding early intervention and the education of
4 children with disabilities.

5 (d) The working group shall submit an interim report of
6 its findings and recommendations, including any proposed
7 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
8 to the convening of the regular session of 2017, and a final
9 report of the working group's findings and recommendations,
10 including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later
11 than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session
12 of 2018.

13 (e) The working group shall cease to exist on June 30,
14 2018.

15 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
17 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2016-2017 to
18 carry out the purposes of this Act, including the establishment,
19 hiring, and filling of three permanent full-time equivalent (3.0
20 FTE) positions to carry out the purposes of establishing and
21 operating the early language acquisition program.



1 There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the
2 State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may
3 be necessary for fiscal year 2016-2017 for one full-time
4 equivalent (1.0 FTE) position to teach American Sign Language
5 for children from birth to age five years who are deaf, hard of
6 hearing, or deaf-blind and for operating expenses.

7 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
8 of health for the purposes of this Act.

9 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

10 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2016.

11



Report Title:

Deaf; Hard of Hearing; Deaf-blind; Early Language Acquisition Program; Working Group; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes the early language acquisition program to assess and track language development for children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Establishes a working group for the purposes of investigating issues related to resources and tools for parents of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and improvements to the statewide system of services that support age-appropriate language development for children from birth to age five who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Requires working group to report to legislature. Appropriates funds for various positions to support the early language acquisition program and children from birth to age five who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. (SD1)

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