



[HF 2539](#) – Deaf Children, Language and Literacy Development (LSB6308HV.1)
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Fiscal Note Version – As amended and passed by the House

Description

[House File 2539](#), as amended, directs the Department of Education (DE) to appoint an Early Language Development Consultant and assign duties to the Consultant including the development and dissemination of resources to parents and educators. The Bill establishes a language assessment program with the purposes of assessing, monitoring, and tracking the language development milestones of children who are deaf or hard of hearing and then, if needed, modifying learning plans to achieve English literacy proficiency. The DE is directed to establish an advisory committee, and membership is detailed in the Bill. The DE is required to publish an annual report regarding language and literacy development for deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to eight years of age.

Background

Deaf or hard of hearing children and students are covered under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education [Act](#) (IDEA), which defines and regulates special education. Iowa's area education agencies (AEAs) are responsible for administration of the [Early ACCESS](#) program, which provides services for infants and toddlers covered under IDEA Part C. Early ACCESS provides early intervention services for children ages birth through two who have a health or physical condition that may affect their growth and development or have developmental delays. The services to be provided to a child covered under IDEA Part C are detailed in an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and the plan is reviewed every six months to determine whether updates are needed. Under IDEA Part B, public schools are required to provide special education to students ages 3 to 21 who meet specified criteria. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) detail how the school will support students needing special education.

In Iowa, deaf or hard of hearing students have options for what setting would best serve their educational needs. The Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD) operates under the Board of Regents to provide educational services to deaf or hard of hearing students from preschool through age 21. The school is located in Council Bluffs. The ISD provides on-site direct instruction to students and has maintained a steady enrollment of about 110 students on campus. The ISD also offers online sign language development courses for students, parents, and school staff. The AEAs provide educational support for deaf and hard-of-hearing students attending other schools across the State.

The DE issued a [report](#) in January 2018 to provide information regarding students who were deaf or hard of hearing in Iowa for the 2016-2017 school year. The report identified 2,775 Iowa residents ranging from ages birth to 21 who were deaf or hard of hearing. The report details student demographics, school district assessment data, and proficiency levels for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) is a nationwide initiative to raise awareness of deaf or hard of hearing children's experiences in language learning and to work

towards school readiness and sufficient language skills by promoting state legislation that allows deaf children to have access to both American Sign Language and English. This Bill is similar to versions of proposed LEAD-K legislation that have passed in California, Hawaii, Kansas, Oregon, South Dakota, Georgia, and Louisiana.

Assumptions

- The guidance provided in the Bill will not hinder established protocols for IFSPs and IEPs that are required under IDEA.
- The Bill will only apply to infants, toddlers, and students who are IDEA-eligible. It is estimated that half of the children or students identified with hearing loss have established IFSPs or IEPs.
- The DE’s estimates for the parent and educator resources are based on past experiences of developing similar materials.
- The DE would need 0.5 additional full-time equivalent (FTE) position to meet the required duties of the Bill for the Early Language Development Consultant.
- Advisory Committee meeting costs will not include expense reimbursement for members but will include costs for interpreters and closed captioners.
- Currently, there are not existing standardized norms for potential tools and assessments that would be used to establish developmental milestones as required by this Bill. The DE will be responsible for contracting with existing assessment vendors to establish standardized norms.

Fiscal Impact

[House File 2539](#) as amended is estimated to increase DE costs by \$879,000 in FY 2021, as detailed in the table below.

Estimated Impact of HF 2539	
	FY 2021
DE Early Language Consultant Position (0.5 FTE)	\$ 54,000
Development of Standardized Norms	500,000
DE Reporting Database	100,000
Task Force Meeting Costs	25,000
Development of Parent Resources	75,000
Development of Educator Resources	75,000
Dissemination of Parent Resources	25,000
Dissemination of Educator Resources	25,000
Grand Total	\$ 879,000

The Department also estimates an additional minimum cost of \$40,000 for the assessment program, which would be administered through the AEAs, school districts, and the Iowa School for the Deaf.

Source

Department of Education

/s/ Holly M. Lyons

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The fiscal note for this Bill was prepared pursuant to [Joint Rule 17](#) and the Iowa Code. Data used in developing this fiscal note is available from the Fiscal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency upon request.

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