

SENATE BILL 4

By Massey

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 50, Part 10, relative to deaf mentor programs.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-50-1008, is amended by deleting the section and substituting:

(a)

(1) The Tennessee School for the Deaf, together with the West Tennessee School for the Deaf, shall maintain a deaf mentor and parent advisor program to assist families in implementing bilingual and bicultural home-based programming for young children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.

(2) The program must be available at:

(A) The West Tennessee School for the Deaf in Jackson;

(B) The Tennessee School for the Deaf, Knoxville campus; and

(C) The Tennessee School for the Deaf, Nashville campus.

(3) The program must focus on:

(A) Preventing language deprivation or gaps through insufficient language access;

(B) Providing a positive impact on a child's social and emotional development through a deaf role model and on a parent's emotional journey of having a deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind child through a parent advisor; and

(C) Ensuring that children who are deaf have equal access to learning opportunities at home and in the community.

(4) The program must use a deaf mentor curriculum.

(5) The program must provide hearing parents of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind with the option of using a deaf mentor to expose the parents' children to American Sign Language and deaf culture and the option of using a parent advisor to expose the parents' children to listening and spoken English strategies and accessibility, allowing the children to grow and learn in a bilingual and bicultural milieu of hearing and deaf cultures instead of limiting the children's exposure to a signed or spoken English-only environment and the hearing culture of the children's families.

(b) Deaf mentors and parent advisors shall:

(1) Make regular visits to the homes of young children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind;

(2) Interact with the children and their families using American Sign Language and spoken English;

(3) Demonstrate American Sign Language and listening and spoken English techniques to family members; and

(4) Help families understand and appreciate deafness and deaf culture, as well as support them in understanding how to provide accommodations and access to communication.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect July 1, 2023, the public welfare requiring it.