

HCS HB 2379 -- DYSLEXIA IN SCHOOLS

SPONSOR: Swan

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 12 to 1. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 8 to 1.

This bill requires each public school to screen students for dyslexia and related disorders at appropriate times in accordance with rules established by the State Board of Education. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) must develop guidelines for the appropriate screening of students and the necessary classroom supports. The requirements and guidelines must be consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia, which is also created by this bill.

The school board of each district and governing board of each charter school must provide reasonable support of any student determined to have dyslexia or a related disorder. "Related disorders" are defined as disorders similar to or related to dyslexia, such as developmental auditory imperception, dysphasia, specific developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, practicing teacher assistance programs will include two hours of in-service training regarding dyslexia and related disorders.

This bill establishes the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia and the Joint Committee on Education will provide technical and administrative support. The task force consists of 18 specified members including two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and two members appointed by the President Pro Tem of the Senate. The task force must meet quarterly and make recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, and specified state agencies.

The task force will make recommendations for a statewide system for identification, intervention, and delivery of supports for students with dyslexia including the development of resource materials, professional development activities, and proposed legislation. The task force must hold its first meeting before October 1, 2016 and submit their report within 12 months of the meeting.

The task force authorized under these provisions will expire on August 31, 2018.

This bill is similar to HB 1255 (2015).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that because so many children have dyslexia, the lack of proper treatment is adversely affecting the educational opportunities of 10% to 20% of Missouri's students. The bill will help schools recognize those with dyslexia and provide the proper education for those students. Currently, many schools either don't, can't, or won't screen for dyslexia. It has been challenging for parents and children affected by dyslexia to succeed within some public schools. Children who receive dyslexia specific tutoring show improvements in school and in other aspects of life. There is currently no requirement for schools to screen children for dyslexia.

Most children with dyslexia don't qualify for IEP because their IQ is too high. Those children are often then placed into a title 1 reading program ran by a teacher with a masters in reading. Even then teachers are often unable to assist the child because their training didn't include dyslexia specific methods. The earlier it is known a child is dyslexic the sooner the child can be helped.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Swan; Missouri Education Reform Council; Madison Edwards; Elliot Greenwood; Peggy Greenwood; Faith Jordon; Anita Kuttenkuler; Abigaile Jordon; Aidan Hallquist; Amy Hallquist; Beck Miller; Sarah Bartley; Mary Harnetiaux; Zane Harnetiaux; and Sam Walter.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.