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## DIGEST

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HB 199 Reengrossed

2018 Regular Session

Smith

**Abstract:** Establishes the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Task Force.

Proposed law creates the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Task Force to (a) develop a resource for parents to monitor and track deaf and hard of hearing children's expressive and receptive language acquisition and developmental stages toward English literacy and (b) develop a framework for assessing children who are deaf or hard of hearing to determine their competencies in language and literacy skills for the purpose of ensuring they are able to achieve kindergarten readiness in an equitable manner. Requires impartiality with regard to the language and modalities used to teach such children. Provides that for proposed law purposes, "English" shall include spoken English, written English, and English with the use of visual supplements, including but not limited to Cued Speech and Signing Exact English. Provides for 22 members as follows:

- (1) 14 members appointed jointly by the state superintendent of education and the secretary of the La. Dept. of Health (LDH), who shall seek input on the appointments from offices and organizations that serve the deaf community. Provides that when making these appointments, preference shall be given, if applicable, to persons with deaf education certification or with early childhood education certification and experience working with children with hearing loss. These members shall be as follows:
  - (a) One parent whose child is deaf or hard of hearing and proficient in American Sign Language (ASL) and English.
  - (b) One parent whose child is deaf or hard of hearing and uses only spoken English.
  - (c) One teacher of children who are deaf or hard of hearing whose expertise is in curriculum and instruction in ASL and English.
  - (d) One teacher of children who are deaf or hard of hearing whose expertise is in curriculum and instruction in English.
  - (e) One early intervention specialist who works with deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers using ASL and spoken English.
  - (f) One administrator of an early intervention program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- (g) One administrator of a school-age program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
  - (h) One speech pathologist with experience working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing on the development of spoken English, with or without the use of visual supplements.
  - (i) One school psychologist with experience working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing and with knowledge in conducting and interpreting cognitive assessments for such students.
  - (j) Two representatives of an association that advocates to enhance the quality of life for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
  - (k) One adult who is deaf or hard of hearing and is proficient in ASL and English.
  - (l) One adult who is deaf or hard of hearing who uses spoken English, without visual supplements.
  - (m) A licensed or certified mental health professional who works with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families.
- (2) One member of La. House of Representatives appointed by the speaker.
  - (3) One member of La. Senate appointed by the president.
  - (4) One representative of La. Dept. of Health appointed by the department secretary.
  - (5) Director of La. Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program or his designee.
  - (6) Executive director of La. Commission for the Deaf or his designee.
  - (7) State superintendent of education or his designee.
  - (8) Executive director of governor's office of disability affairs or his designee.
  - (9) Outreach coordinator for the Parent Pupil Education Program at La. School for the Deaf.

Proposed law provides relative to membership and meetings:

- (1) A vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.
- (2) Members shall elect a chairman and serve without compensation.
- (3) The state Dept. of Education and the La. Dept. of Health shall provide staff support and shall

jointly call the first meeting.

- (4) The task force shall hold its initial meeting no later than Aug. 1, 2018, and shall be domiciled in Baton Rouge but may hold public meetings elsewhere in the state.

Proposed law provides that the task force shall study and make recommendations relative to matters that shall include but need not be limited to developing a framework for assessing children who are deaf or hard of hearing and selecting language developmental milestones from existing standardized norms. Requires the task force to do all of the following:

- (1) Review and make recommendations relative to existing tools or assessments for educators to use to assess the language and literacy development of such children.
- (2) Determine how often such tools or assessments should be used for children from birth to age five.
- (3) Identify language development milestones for such children by consulting with professionals trained in the language development and education of such children.
- (4) Identify procedures and methods for reporting language acquisition, assessment results, milestones, assessment tools used, and progress of such children to parents and to teachers and other professionals involved in their early intervention and education.
- (5) Make recommendations relative to ensuring that state law and state and local policies are adequately addressing the language developmental needs of such children.

Proposed law requires the task force to submit a report to the House and Senate education committees and health and welfare committees not later than Feb. 1, 2019. Requires the state Dept. of Education and the La. Dept. of Health to submit responses to this report to these committees not later than March 1, 2019.

Proposed law is effective upon signature of governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action and is repealed on March 1, 2019.

(Adds R.S. 17:1960.1 and R.S. 36:651(G)(6); Repeals R.S. 17:1960.1 and R.S. 36:651(G)(6))

### Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Education to the original bill:

1. Revise provisions relative to commission membership as follows:
  - (a) Increase number of commission members from 19 to 22 by adding a mental health professional, a medical professional, and the executive director of the

Governor's Office of Disability Affairs.

- (b) Instead of granting sole appointment authority of a majority of the commission to the state superintendent of education, provide for joint appointment by the superintendent and the secretary of the La. Dept. of Health with input from offices and organizations that serve the deaf community.
  - (c) Relative to appointments, add that preference be given, if applicable, to those holding early childhood or deaf education certification.
2. Instead of requiring that the task force be impartial with regard to language taught to children who are deaf or hard of hearing, require that it be impartial with regard to language modalities used to teach them.

The House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill:

1. Expand purpose of task force to include developing a resource for parents to monitor and track deaf and hard of hearing children's expressive and receptive language acquisition and developmental stages toward English literacy.
2. Add that for proposed law purposes, "English" shall include spoken English, written English, and English with the use of visual supplements, including but not limited to Cued Speech and Signing Exact English.
3. Relative to membership: retain total membership of 22 but replace medical professional and audiologist with director of the La. Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program and outreach coordinator for the Parent Pupil Education Program at the La. School for the Deaf; specify that the mental health professional shall be one who is licensed or certified and works with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families.
4. Add that the state supt. of education and secretary of La. Dept. of Health shall jointly call the first task force meeting.
5. Instead of requiring that the task force be impartial with regard to language modalities used to teach children who are deaf or hard of hearing, requires impartiality regarding language and modalities used to teach them.