

HCS HB 921 -- DYSLEXIA

SPONSOR: Burlison

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 12 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill changes the laws regarding dyslexia. In its main provisions, the bill:

- (1) Requires, by July 1, 2016, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to employ a dyslexia therapist, licensed psychometrist, licensed speech-language pathologist, certified academic language therapist, or certified training specialist to serve as the department's dyslexia specialist who has a minimum of three years of field experience in screening, identifying, and treating dyslexia and related disorders;
- (2) Requires the department to ensure that the dyslexia specialist has completed specified training and received specified certification;
- (3) Specifies the qualifications the dyslexia specialist must possess and the responsibilities he or she will have, including assisting the department with developing and administering specified programs for school districts no later than the 2016-17 school year;
- (4) Establishes the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia and requires the Joint Committee on Education to provide technical and administrative support as required by the task force to fulfill its duties;
- (5) Requires the task force to meet at least quarterly and to advise and make recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, and relevant state agencies regarding matters concerning individuals with dyslexia, including education and other adult and adolescent services. The meetings may be held via telephone or video conference;
- (6) Requires the task force to consist of 18 members who will serve without compensation. Two must be members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House. The remaining membership is specified in the bill;
- (7) Requires the task force to make recommendations for a statewide system for identification, intervention, and delivery of

supports for students with dyslexia including the development of resource materials and professional development activities, which must be included in a report to the Governor and legislature and must include findings and proposed legislation. The report must be made available no longer than 12 months from the task force's first meeting; and

(8) Specifies what should be included in the recommendations and resource materials developed by the task force.

The task force authorized under these provisions will expire on August 31, 2017.

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.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Burlison; Gina Kreissler; Kelli Unnerstall; Dr. Jennifer Williams; Nick Leif; Eric Leif; Noel Leif; Hannah Leif; Leslie Lemery; Mary Armstrong, AFT St.Louis Local 420; Julie Shaw; Missouri National Education Association; Missouri State Teachers Association; Missouri School Boards Association; and School Administrators Coalition.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.