

Language Readiness

for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children Entering Kindergarten



H.3550 & S.305 Need Your Support

An act to ensure language readiness for deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) children entering kindergarten

This bill will establish a system of monitoring DHH children during the critical language acquisition period - birth to 5 years old - to ensure that each child is on track to enter kindergarten with intact language through:

1

MILESTONES

Resources to support parents in monitoring their child's language acquisition

2

ASSESSMENTS

Tracking of language & literacy-readiness in time for kindergarten

3

DATA

Support informed IFSP/IEP decision-making & health & education policy-making



Protects

children from the dire effects of language deprivation



Supports

Parental Choice

of English, American Sign Language, or both



Empowers

parents and families in the IFSP/IEP process

Language Deprivation Has Devastating Effects

Incomplete first language acquisition has irreparable catastrophic consequences for the educational, social, and academic development of DHH children over their lifetimes.

Although the Commonwealth is a national leader in ensuring that DHH children meet national goals for screening, diagnosis, and early intervention, **these protections are insufficient to promote language acquisition.**

The process of acquiring a language in the critical period from birth to 5 years old not only serves communication needs, but also shapes and prepares the brain for literacy development, builds cognitive capacity, and lays the groundwork for future academic achievement and a good quality of life. **DHH children often lack adequate access to language in these critical years.**

Lawmakers must enact this law to ensure that DHH children arrive at kindergarten with language commensurate with their age and cognitive ability. California, Georgia, Hawaii,



Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Oregon, and South Dakota have already enacted similar legislation.

What You Can Do...

- Contact your State Representative and Senator to ask for their support: <https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator>
- Be an advocate! Contact Massachusetts LEAD-K to find out how you can help. See URL and contact information below.
- Show your support at the bill hearing at the Massachusetts State House, Gardner Auditorium, on July 23, 2019 at 10:00 a.m.

WHAT THE BILL DOES NOT DO

- ▶ Nothing in the bill restricts parents' right to choose the language or communication program that works best for their child and family.
- ▶ No specific intervention services are prescribed or recommended.
- ▶ The bill does not discourage use of cochlear implant or other amplification technology.
- ▶ The bill does not compete or conflict with federal IDEA law protecting children with disabilities, nor does it interfere with the IFSP/IEP process.

