

HOUSE BILL NO. 39

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVE ALLARD

Introduced: 1/17/25

Referred: Prefiled

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act relating to public school students who are deaf or hard of hearing."**

2 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

3 * **Section 1.** AS 14.30.272 is amended by adding new subsections to read:

4 (c) A school district shall, in collaboration with the department and to the
5 maximum extent possible,

6 (1) provide a parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, or who
7 the school district suspects may be deaf or hard of hearing, with comprehensive,
8 neutral, and unbiased information regarding

9 (A) hearing technology, including hearing aids, bone-anchored
10 hearing aids, cochlear implants, and remote microphone systems;

11 (B) different methods of communication for a child who is deaf
12 or hard of hearing, including listening and spoken language, a bilingual
13 approach, cued speech, and total communication;

14 (C) services and programs that are designed to meet the needs
15 of children who are deaf or hard of hearing; and

(D) support and advocacy services offered by public and private agencies and other entities knowledgeable about the needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing;

(2) allow the parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, or who the school district suspects may be deaf or hard of hearing, to choose the method of communication that the parent determines is most appropriate for the child and provide services using the parent's chosen method of communication for the child; and

(3) deliver services to a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, or who the school district suspects may be deaf or hard of hearing, through professionals with training, experience, and a background in the chosen method of communication.

(d) A school district shall inform a parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, or who the school district suspects may be deaf or hard of hearing, of the school district's duties and of the parent's rights provided under (c) of this section.

(e) In this section,

(1) "bilingual approach" means the development of both sign language and English language literacy skills as a child's mode of receptive and expressive communication;

(2) "cued speech" means a visual communication system that uses hand shapes and placements in combination with the mouth movements of speech to identify the phonemes of spoken language that look similar to one another;

(3) "deaf" means possessing hearing levels that, with or without hearing technology, substantially affect a child's ability to understand spoken language;

(4) "hard of hearing" means possessing hearing levels that, with or without hearing technology, affect a child's ability to understand spoken language;

(5) "listening and spoken language" means communication that focuses on maximizing listening through the use of hearing technologies, professional intervention, and family involvement and support to facilitate the acquisition and development of the spoken language of the child's home and community;

(6) "total communication" means the combined use of signs, speech, speech-reading, auditory training, visual aids, manual gestures, and writing to convey

1 information.

2 * **Sec. 2.** AS 14.30.276 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

3 (b) The department shall support one or more programs for the deaf to be
4 made available to deaf students in the state. The program may provide residential
5 services as part of its educational program in consultation and collaboration with a
6 nongovernmental organization that provides services to people who are deaf and hard
7 of hearing. If a school district operates a program, the school district shall annually
8 submit a plan of operations to the department for approval and shall perform all duties
9 of a local school district related to special education under state and federal law,
10 except that the school district is only required to offer transportation to students who
11 reside in the district. If a school district determines that placement in the program is
12 appropriate for a child who resides in the district, the school district that makes the
13 placement retains the school district's responsibilities for special education for that
14 child under state and federal law.