

SENATE BILL NO. 8

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON

Introduced: 1/10/25

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

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

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

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

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

15 (D) support and advocacy services offered by public and

1 private agencies and other entities knowledgeable about the needs of children
2 who are deaf or hard of hearing;

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

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

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

13 (e) In this section,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 (b) The department shall establish and operate a centralized program for the
3 deaf to be made available to deaf students in the state. The program must provide
4 residential services as part of its educational program. The program may be operated
5 by a school district under an agreement with the department. If a school district
6 operates the program, the school district shall annually submit a plan of operations to
7 the department for approval and shall perform all duties of a local school district
8 related to special education under state and federal law, except that the school district
9 is required to offer transportation only to students who reside in the district. If a school
10 district determines that placement at the program is appropriate for a child who resides
11 in the district, the school district that makes the placement retains the school district's
12 responsibilities for special education for that child under state and federal law. The
13 department shall provide to a school district that operates the program funding for
14 students who attend the program.