

HOUSE BILL 567

By White M

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
Chapter 10, Part 9, relative to a deaf mentor pilot
project.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 10, Part 9, is amended by
adding the following language as a new section:

(a)

(1) The Tennessee School for the Deaf, together with the West Tennessee School for the Deaf, shall establish a two-year deaf mentor pilot project to assist families and agencies in implementing bilingual and bicultural home-based programming for young children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.

(2) The pilot project must consist of three (3) programs with one (1) program to be located at each of the following locations: the West Tennessee School for the Deaf in Jackson; the Tennessee School for the Deaf, Knoxville campus; and the Tennessee School for the Deaf, Nashville campus.

(3) The pilot project must focus on:

(A) Preventing language deprivation;

(B) Providing a positive impact on a child's social and emotional development through a deaf role model; and

(C) Ensuring that children who are deaf have equal access to learning opportunities at home and in the community.

(4) The pilot project must use a deaf mentor curriculum.

(5) Each pilot project program must provide hearing parents of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind with the option of using a deaf mentor to expose the parents' children to American Sign Language and deaf culture, allowing the children to grow and learn in a bilingual and bicultural milieu of hearing and deaf cultures instead of limiting the children's exposure to a signed or spoken English-only environment and the hearing culture of the children's families.

(b) Deaf mentors shall:

(1) Make regular visits to the homes of young children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind;

(2) Interact with the children using American Sign Language;

(3) Demonstrate to family members how to use American Sign Language; and

(4) Help families understand and appreciate deafness and deaf culture.

(c) The pilot project will begin with the 2019-2020 school year.

(d) At the end of the pilot project, the department of education shall evaluate the pilot project and its three (3) programs to determine whether the project and programs should be continued or replicated. The department shall report its findings and conclusions to the education committee of the senate and the education administration and planning committee of the house of representatives by no later than February 1, 2022.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.