

By: Senator(s) Simmons (13th), Boyd

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2621

1 AN ACT TO ENACT THE MISSISSIPPI DYSLEXIA EDUCATION FUNDING
2 ACT; TO DEFINE TERMS; TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL SCHOOLS
3 FUNDING GRANT PROGRAM TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
4 EDUCATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING DYSLEXIA THERAPY TO AID
5 STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA AS WELL AS TO FUND DYSLEXIA THERAPISTS OR
6 SUPPORT STAFF IN SCHOOLS; TO PROVIDE THAT EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT
7 SHALL RECEIVE A MINIMUM AMOUNT UNDER THE GRANT PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE
8 THAT THE REMAINING FUNDS IN THE GRANT PROGRAM SHALL BE DISTRIBUTED
9 UPON APPLICATION; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT TO PROMULGATE RULES
10 AND REGULATIONS TO ADMINISTER THE GRANT PROGRAM; TO CREATE THE
11 DYSLEXIA EDUCATION FUND AS A SPECIAL FUND IN THE STATE TREASURY;
12 TO PROVIDE THAT MONIES APPROPRIATED OUT OF THE FUND MAY BE USED TO
13 REIMBURSE ACTUAL OVERSIGHT COSTS UP TO A CERTAIN AMOUNT; AND FOR
14 RELATED PURPOSES.

15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

16 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the
17 "Mississippi Dyslexia Education Funding Act."

18 **SECTION 2.** For purposes of this act, the following words
19 shall have the meanings ascribed herein unless the context clearly
20 requires otherwise:

21 (a) "Department" means the State Department of
22 Education.

23 (b) "Dyslexia" means a specific learning disability
24 that is neurological in origin, characterized by difficulties with



25 accurate and fluent word recognition and poor spelling and
26 decoding abilities, which typically result from a deficit in the
27 phonological component of language that is often unexpected in
28 relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of
29 effective classroom instruction, and secondary consequences which
30 may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading
31 experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background
32 knowledge.

33 (c) "Dyslexia therapy" means an appropriate specialized
34 dyslexia instructional program that is delivered by a Mississippi
35 Department of Education licensed dyslexia therapist which is
36 scientific, research-based, Orton-Gillingham based, and is offered
37 in a small group setting to teach students the components of
38 reading instruction which include:

39 (i) Phonemic awareness to enable students to
40 detect, segment, blend and manipulate sounds in spoken language;

41 (ii) Graphophonemic knowledge (phonics) for
42 teaching the letter-sound plan of English;

43 (iii) The entire structure of the English language
44 that encompasses morphology, semantics, syntax and pragmatics;

45 (iv) Linguistic instruction directed toward
46 proficiency and fluency with the patterns of language so that
47 words and sentences are carriers of meaning; and

48 (v) Strategies that students use for decoding,
49 encoding, word recognition, fluency and comprehension.



50 These components shall be taught using instructional
51 approaches that include explicit, direct instruction which is
52 systematic, sequential and cumulative, following a logical plan of
53 presenting the alphabetic principle commensurate with the
54 students' needs, with no assumption of prior skills or language
55 knowledge; individualized to meet the specific learning needs of
56 each individual student in a small group setting; intensive,
57 highly concentrated instruction that maximizes student engagement
58 and uses specialized methods and materials; meaning-based
59 instruction directed toward purposeful reading and writing, with
60 an emphasis on comprehension and composition; and multisensory
61 instruction that incorporates the simultaneous use of two (2) or
62 more sensory pathways during teacher presentations and student
63 practice.

64 (d) "Dyslexia therapist" means a professional who has
65 completed training in a department approved Orton-Gillingham based
66 dyslexia therapy training program attaining an AA license in
67 dyslexia therapy or a professional participating in a state
68 approved dyslexia therapy training program to attain an AA license
69 in dyslexia therapy.

70 (e) "Grant program" means the Mississippi Dyslexia
71 Education Funding Grant Program established in this act.

72 (f) "Mississippi Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for
73 Students with Dyslexia Program" means a scholarship to provide the
74 option to attend a public school other than the one to which is



assigned, or to provide a scholarship to a nonpublic school of choice, for students in Grade 1 through Grade 12 diagnosed with dyslexia in order to receive comprehensive multisensory dyslexia therapy delivered by holders of an appropriate license in dyslexia therapy issued by the department.

(g) "School" means any public school district, any agricultural high school, the Mississippi School for the Deaf and Blind, the Mississippi School of the Arts and the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science and any public charter school.

SECTION 3. (1) There is established the Mississippi Dyslexia Education Funding Grant Program which shall be administered by the department for the purpose of providing dyslexia therapy to aid students with dyslexia as well as to fund dyslexia therapists or support staff in schools.

(2) The department shall distribute grants to each school. Each school shall receive a grant in the amount of at least One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) under the grant program by October 1, 2025. The remaining funds in the grant program shall be distributed upon application to the department until the funds are depleted.

(3) The department shall promulgate rules and regulations to administer the grant program.

(4) The department shall provide an annual report to the Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House and Governor concerning



the distribution of funds under this grant program. The report shall be filed by December 1 of each year.

SECTION 4. (1) There is created a special fund in the State Treasury to be known as the "Dyslexia Education Fund" which shall consist of monies from any source designated for deposit into the fund. Unexpended amounts remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not lapse into the State General Fund, and any investment earnings or interest earned on amounts in the fund shall be deposited to the credit of the fund.

(2) (a) Monies in the fund shall be disbursed by the department for the purposes described in this act.

(b) In addition to the purposes in paragraph (a) of this subsection, monies appropriated out of the fund may be used to reimburse reasonable actual and necessary oversight costs incurred by the department in providing grants or loans under this section. The department shall maintain an accounting of actual costs and expenses incurred for which reimbursement is sought for each grant or loan. Reimbursement of reasonable actual and necessary costs and expenses for assistance shall not exceed one and twenty-five one-hundredths percent (1.25%) of the monies appropriated out of the fund. Reimbursements made under this paragraph shall satisfy any applicable federal tax law requirements.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

