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To: Education

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR
SENATE BILL NO. 2681

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-173-1, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO EXPAND THE DYSLEXIA THERAPY SCHOLARSHIP FOR STUDENTS WITH
3 DYSLEXIA PROGRAM BY MAKING CERTIFIED ACADEMIC LANGUAGE THERAPISTS
4 (CALT) ELIGIBLE TO BE EMPLOYED BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO PROVIDE
5 DYSLEXIA SERVICES; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ISSUE
6 LICENSES TO INDIVIDUALS THROUGH RECIPROCITY IF THE INDIVIDUAL
7 MEETS CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

9 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-173-1, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
10 amended as follows:

11 37-173-1. As used in this chapter, the following words and
12 phrases shall have the meanings ascribed in this section unless
13 the context clearly indicates otherwise:

14 (a) "Board" means the State Board of Education.

15 (b) "Department" means the State Department of
16 Education.

17 (c) "Dyslexia" means a specific learning disability
18 that is neurological in origin, characterized by difficulties with
19 accurate and fluent word recognition and poor spelling and
20 decoding abilities, which typically result from a deficit in the



21 phonological component of language that is often unexpected in
22 relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of
23 effective classroom instruction, and secondary consequences which
24 may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading
25 experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background
26 knowledge.

27 (d) "Dyslexia therapy" means an appropriate specialized
28 dyslexia instructional program that is delivered by a Mississippi
29 Department of Education licensed dyslexia therapist which is
30 scientific, research-based, Orton-Gillingham based, and is offered
31 in a small group setting to teach students the components of
32 reading instruction which include:

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

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

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

39 (iv) Linguistic instruction directed toward
40 proficiency and fluency with the patterns of language so that
41 words and sentences are carriers of meaning; and

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

44 These components shall be taught using instructional
45 approaches that include explicit, direct instruction which is



46 systematic, sequential and cumulative, following a logical plan of
47 presenting the alphabetic principle commensurate with the
48 students' needs, with no assumption of prior skills or language
49 knowledge; individualized to meet the specific learning needs of
50 each individual student in a small group setting; intensive,
51 highly concentrated instruction that maximizes student engagement
52 and uses specialized methods and materials; meaning-based
53 instruction directed toward purposeful reading and writing, with
54 an emphasis on comprehension and composition; and multisensory
55 instruction that incorporates the simultaneous use of two (2) or
56 more sensory pathways during teacher presentations and student
57 practice.

58 (e) "AA license" means a certification issued by the
59 department to educators who hold a master's degree, indicating
60 their eligibility to teach in specific academic settings within
61 the State of Mississippi.

62 (f) "Qualified Instructor of Certified Academic
63 Language Therapists" means a professional who is certified in
64 instructor competency through a nationally recognized
65 Orton-Gillingham based dyslexia therapy organization or
66 Orton-Gillingham based academic language therapy organization and
67 has:

68 (i) Experience in Orton-Gillingham based dyslexia
69 therapy situations that include remediating students of various



70 severity levels, ages and group sizes not exceeding six (6)
71 students;

72 (ii) Completed a minimum of fourteen hundred
73 (1400) clinical therapy hours;

74 (iii) Completed a minimum of two (2) curriculum
75 therapy cycles remediating students;

76 (iv) Trained in a minimum of two (2)
77 Orton-Gillingham based dyslexia therapy curriculum programs;

78 (v) Assisted in training educators through an
79 Orton-Gillingham based dyslexia therapy program under a Qualified
80 Instructor of Certified Academic Language Therapists; and

81 (vi) A master's degree or higher level of
82 education.

83 (* * *g) "Department of Education licensed dyslexia
84 therapist" means a professional:

85 (i) Who has completed training in a department
86 approved Orton-Gillingham based dyslexia therapy training program
87 attaining a AA license in dyslexia therapy * * *; or

88 (ii) Holding or currently participating in a
89 master's degree that leads to an AA license and a

90 department-approved Orton-Gillingham based dyslexia therapy
91 training program; or

92 (iii) Holding a standard five-year license or
93 administrator license and a master's degree having completed a



94 department-approved Orton-Gillingham based dyslexia training
95 program; or

96 (iv) Holding:

97 1. A national certification for
98 Orton-Gillingham based dyslexia therapy or Orton-Gillingham based
99 academic language therapy from a nationally recognized
100 professional organization;

101 2. College transcripts as proof of a master's
102 degree or greater level of graduate education; and

103 3. Current membership in a national
104 certifying organization for Orton-Gillingham based dyslexia
105 therapy or Orton-Gillingham based academic language therapy as
106 proof of maintenance of professional continuing education
107 standards.

108 (h) "Approved dyslexia therapy training program" means
109 a program accredited by the International Multisensory Structured
110 Language Education Council (IMSLEC) and includes:

111 (i) A minimum of two hundred (200) hours of
112 coursework and seven hundred (700) hours of clinical work,
113 observed and monitored by a Qualified Instructor of Certified
114 Academic Language Therapists; and

115 (ii) A reading-science competency examination,
116 including multisensory structured language, administered by a
117 nationally recognized organization with authority to issue
118 national certification.



119 (* * *i) "Mississippi Dyslexia Therapy Scholarship for
120 Students with Dyslexia Program" means a scholarship to provide the
121 option to attend a public school other than the one to which
122 assigned, or to provide a scholarship to a nonpublic school of
123 choice, for students in Grade 1 through Grade 12 diagnosed with
124 dyslexia in order to receive comprehensive multisensory dyslexia
125 therapy delivered by holders of an appropriate license in dyslexia
126 therapy issued by the department.

127 (* * *j) "School" means any public or state_accredited
128 nonpublic special purpose school that provides a specific learning
129 environment that provides comprehensive dyslexia therapy
130 instruction delivered by dyslexia therapists licensed by the
131 department providing highly qualified education and intervention
132 services to children diagnosed with the primary learning
133 disability of dyslexia.

134 **SECTION 2.** If the individual meets the requirements of
135 Section 37-173-1(g) and is otherwise licensed by their state's
136 respective department or agency that licenses such occupations,
137 then the Department of Education shall issue the individual a
138 license through reciprocity.

139 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
140 and after July 1, 2024.

