

Amend the READ Act to include deaf and deafblind children

Date: March 13, 2024

To: Senate Education Policy
Sen. Steve A. Cwodzinski, Chair

From: Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing

Please support updating the READ Act to include those who cannot fully access sound-based approaches – SF3698

Since the passage of the READ Act, we at the Commission have been approached by educators working with deaf, deafblind, and hard of children with concerns on how to comply with the new law. These educators very much support the goal of increased literacy and want to ensure that their students can benefit from this valuable initiative.

The gist of their concerns is that the READ Act requirements and incentives do not account for students and educators who may not be able to fully access sound-based approaches such as phonics, nor does it recognize that sign language is a valid – and increasingly supported by research – foundation for literacy.

Through our network of educators, including those at a teacher licensure preparation program, we gathered input and worked with Sen. Maye Quade's office to make edits to the current proposed amendment. In addition, we are asking that legislators establish a working group to identify and recommend alternatives to the sound-based approaches required by the current approved READ Act training, curricula, and screeners. Educators statewide already must make those adaptations within each school or program, but largely in isolation. Bringing representatives together on a state level to pool their knowledge will help make best practices available to even more deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing children in Minnesota.

Please support amending SF3698 to be inclusive of those who cannot fully access sound-based approaches to literacy instruction. We are grateful to Sen. Erin Maye Quade for her support in ensuring that the benefits of the READ Act reach as many children as possible.

Signed,



Alicia Lane, Government Relations Director