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MEMORANDUM

To: Chairman Abrams
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Jason B. Long, Senior Assistant Revisor

Date: March 7, 2016

Subject: SB 444 – Language Assessment Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children.

Senate Bill No. 444 establishes a language assessment program for assessing, monitoring and tracking language development of children who are deaf or hard of hearing from birth to age eight. The program would be administered by the Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH). KCDHH is a state agency within the Department for Children and Families that advocates for and facilitates equal access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Beginning July 1, 2018, each child under the age 9 who is deaf or hard of hearing will be assessed each year. The language assessments will be provided either through early intervention services or through the local school district depending on the age of the child at the time of the assessment. Results of the language assessments are to be reported to the parents of the child and the child's IFSP or IEP team. Results are also to be reported on an aggregated basis to KCDHH to assist the Commission in the publication of information on improving education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. KCDHH is to annually report on the language and literacy development of the children who fall within the scope of the program.

SB 444 also establishes a 13-member advisory committee within KCDHH to assist the Commission in developing the language assessment program. The advisory committee consists of six members appointed by the Governor. These members include teachers of the deaf, experts on language development, and parents of a child who is deaf. The other seven members of the committee serve in an *ex officio* capacity. They include: The executive director of KCDHH; the coordinators of the Sound Start Program, the Early Intervention Program, and the Early

Education Program; and the KCDHH members representing the State School for the Deaf, the Department of Health and Environment, and the State Board of Education.

By January 31, 2018, the advisory committee is to develop specific action plans and proposed rules and regulations to implement the language assessment program. The committee's work includes soliciting expert advice on language developmental milestones, selecting language assessments, identifying criteria for language experts for IFSP and IEP team input, identifying criteria for language assessment evaluators, and identifying methods for communicating assessment results. The bill also includes more specific directions for the advisory committee. These are set out in subsection (f) on page 3 of the bill.

Definitions of key terms can be found in subsection (h) on page 4 of the bill.

If enacted the provisions of SB 444 would become effective on July 1, 2016.