Senate Bill 49

By: Senators Thomas of the 2nd, Harp of the 29th, Johnson of the 1st and Hudgens of the 47th

AS PASSED

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

To amend Chapter 15 of Title 34 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to transfer of Division of Rehabilitation Services to Department of Labor, so as to provide for the delivery of certain services and techniques to deaf-blind individuals by an organization knowledgeable on deaf-blind issues; to provide that the division integrates the services and techniques into its standard practices and procedures; to provide for a time frame to retain the services of an organization to provide services and techniques to deaf-blind individuals and training on such services and techniques; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Chapter 15 of Title 34 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to transfer of Division of Rehabilitation Services to Department of Labor, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"34-15-20.

(a) The Division of Rehabilitation Services of the Department of Labor shall oversee the delivery of deaf-blind services and techniques provided by an organization pursuant to subsection (c) of this Code section that lead to maximum independence and employment for individuals with both a hearing and a vision loss. These services shall include, but not be limited to, transition of deaf-blind youth from education to the workforce; identification of deaf-blind individuals in Georgia; communication access for varying groups of individuals and their unique needs; training deaf-blind individuals in orientation and mobility, rehabilitation, and Braille; utilization of support service providers to function as sighted guides, communication facilitators, and providers of transportation; support and increase in the number of qualified sign language interpreters working with deaf-blind individuals; use of adaptive technologies, such as computers, telebraillers, and TTY devices; strategies and techniques to assist deaf-blind individuals in obtaining the highest

level of independence possible; and peer support which provides access to information, people, and places.

(b) The division shall, to the greatest extent possible, integrate the services and techniques required pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section into its standard practices and procedures with the objective of providing appropriate services in an appropriate manner to individuals in the deaf-blind community.

(c) Subject to appropriations by the General Assembly, the Division of Rehabilitation Services shall retain an organization knowledgeable on deaf-blind issues to provide the services and techniques included in subsection (a) of this Code section to deaf-blind individuals and to provide comprehensive training to division staff on such services and techniques required pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code section. Such organization shall be retained no later than six months after funding from appropriations by the General Assembly has been made available for expenditure by the department.″

SECTION 2.

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.