

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8859

To require the Bureau of the Census to collect information on deafblind individuals, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 27, 2024

Mr. CARTWRIGHT (for himself, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. WILLIAMS of New York, Ms. NORTON, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. TONKO, Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. LAWLER, Mr. GOLDMAN of New York, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Ms. CROCKETT, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. HARDER of California, Mrs. PELTOLA, Mr. BOWMAN, Mr. MORELLE, and Mr. CÁRDENAS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability

A BILL

To require the Bureau of the Census to collect information on deafblind individuals, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Deafblind Disabled Americans Table Approximation
6 Act” or the “Deafblind DATA Act”.

7 (b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Individuals who are deafblind experience
2 concomitant hearing and vision loss that may pre-
3 vent access to information, cause severe communica-
4 tion challenges, and interfere with social and emo-
5 tional well-being. In children, deafblindness may im-
6 pact development and educational attainment, while
7 in adults, deafblindness may interfere with employ-
8 ment and other areas. The National Center on
9 Deafblindness estimates 10,000 children and 40,000
10 adults are deafblind, the National Association of
11 Regulatory Utility Commissioners estimates 70,000–
12 100,000 people are deafblind, and the Helen Keller
13 National Center for Deafblind Youths and Adults es-
14 timates 2.47 million Americans have combined hear-
15 ing and vision loss.

16 (2) It is difficult to determine the precise num-
17 ber of individuals who experience combined hearing
18 and vision loss, and estimates from various national
19 counts offer radically different estimates.

20 (3) An accurate, centralized count of all individ-
21 uals who are deafblind in the United States is nec-
22 essary to effectively serve the unique needs of this
23 population. Without a comprehensive national pic-
24 ture of this population, individuals who are deafblind
25 may not receive the supports necessary to access in-

1 formation, communicate effectively, and better their
2 social and emotional well-being.

3 (4) The Bureau of the Census currently does
4 not count individuals who experience combined hear-
5 ing and vision loss. Through the American Commu-
6 nity Survey, the Bureau does collect data on those
7 who are deaf or have “serious difficulty hearing”
8 and those who are blind or have “serious difficulty
9 seeing even when wearing glasses”. However, this
10 data is not cross referenced to provide information
11 about those who have both limitations.

12 (5) Some people who experience combined hear-
13 ing and vision loss identify as deafblind or as a part
14 of the deafblind community.

15 (6) By cross referencing this existing data to
16 establish a count of all respondents to the American
17 Community Survey who experience concomitant
18 hearing and vision loss, an estimate of the United
19 States deafblind population may be calculated.

20 **SEC. 2. REPORT AND PUBLICATION ON DEAFBLIND INDI-**
21 **VIDUALS.**

22 (a) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date
23 of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Bureau
24 of the Census shall submit to Congress a report on the
25 feasibility of publishing the table described in subsection

1 (b) and the feasibility of expanding data collection on indi-
2 viduals who experience combined hearing and vision loss
3 in the American Community Survey (or any successor sur-
4 vey).

5 (b) PUBLICATION OF TABLE.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning in 2026 and each
7 year thereafter, the Director of the Bureau of the
8 Census shall publish, on the public website of the
9 Bureau, a table summarizing respondents to the
10 American Community Survey (or any successor sur-
11 vey) who answered “Yes” in such Survey to being
12 both deaf and blind. The table shall include the fol-
13 lowing information, sorted by the State in which
14 such respondent resides:

15 (A) The sex, race, and age of any such re-
16 spondent.

17 (B) Economic characteristics of any such
18 respondent, including employment status, edu-
19 cational attainment, earnings, and poverty sta-
20 tus.

21 (2) LIMITATION.—The Director shall ensure
22 that no personally identifiable information of any in-
23 dividual is published under paragraph (1).

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