

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1418

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to state schools for the blind, deaf, and sensory impaired.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to state schools for the blind, deaf, and sensory impaired.

Sponsors: Representatives Ogden, H. Myers, Casada, Morris, Carlson and Jones; by request of Washington State School for the Blind and Washington State School for the Deaf.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, February 18, 1993, DPS;
Appropriations, March 3, 1993, DPS(ED).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Dorn, Chair; Cothorn, Vice Chair; Brough, Ranking Minority Member; Thomas, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Carlson; G. Cole; Eide; Hansen; Holm; Jones; Karahalios; J. Kohl; Patterson; Pruitt; Roland; Stevens; and Vance.

Staff: Shirley Leckman (786-7291).

Background: The schools for the blind, deaf, and sensory handicapped are located in Vancouver, Washington. The School for the Blind occupies 11 acres, with 65 to 80 on-campus students, and an additional 60 students being provided vision services. The School for the Deaf occupies 27 acres and has 160 to 170 full time students. Both were originally under the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS); in 1985, they were moved to the Governor's Office.

Existing law is being amended to clean up and eliminate unnecessary language and provisions, and to reflect changes in procedure and practice, in order to allow the schools to better carry out their missions as advocates for improved services for deaf and blind children.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Unnecessary language concerning contracting with DSHS is eliminated. Language concerning working conditions is changed to bring the law into compliance with merit system rules and regulations, and union contracts. Language concerning representatives from various organizations is changed to reflect the current restructuring of the organizations.

A section on transportation is clarified to reflect that there is no cost to families to send the students home on weekends, which brings the section into compliance with state and federal law.

The schools are required to extend services to children beginning at age three, where previously services began at age five. The schools are allowed to extend services to the birth through three age group, subject to available funding.

The number of times the boards of trustees are required to meet each year is reduced from six to four. A section requiring appointment of local advisory committees is repealed.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Changes are technical only and have no substantive effect on the original bill. In Section 3, wording that the state has no obligation to fund programs for children ages birth through three, is changed to read that the schools may provide services to this age group subject to available funding. Language in Section 5, that the schools may contract for transportation with students, parents or both is eliminated as unnecessary since the schools contract for transportation from a variety of sources.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This is mainly a "house cleaning" bill, but it also allows the schools to provide nonresidential services to children ages birth through three, at no financial obligation to the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: (Pro): Dr. Dean Stenehjem, Superintendent, Washington School for the Blind; Dr. Gary Holman, Superintendent, Washington School for the Deaf; and Barbara Freeman.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Education be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 23 members: Representatives Locke, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Silver, Ranking Minority Member; Carlson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Ballasiotes; Basich; Cooke; Dellwo; Dorn; Dunshee; G. Fisher; Jacobsen; Linville; Morton; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Sommers; Stevens; Talcott; Wineberry; and Wolfe.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7153).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Education:

No new changes were recommended.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This is simply a clean-up of the authorizing statutes for the schools for the Deaf and the Blind. The bill expands the ability of the schools to serve children younger than age three, but there is no fiscal impact on the state unless funds are authorized.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Val Ogden (pro); Dr. Dean Stenehjem, Superintendent, Washington School for the Blind (pro); and Dr. Gary Holman, Superintendent, Washington School for the Deaf (pro).