

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1078

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to the instruction in Braille reading and writing to blind students.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to instruction in Braille.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Ogden, Carlson, Casada, Cole, Quall, Benton, Pennington, Thibaudeau, Cooke, Boldt and Huff).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/27/95, 2/16/95 [DPS];

Appropriations: 2/27/95, 3/4/95 [DP2S(w/o sub ED)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/8/95, 98-0

Passed House: 1/17/96, 93-0.

Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Brumsickle, Chairman; Elliot, Vice Chairman; Johnson, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Poulsen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Clements; Dickerson; G. Fisher; Hatfield; McMahan; Quall; Radcliff; Smith; Talcott; B. Thomas; Thompson and Veloria.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Fuhrman.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Education. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Silver, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; Huff, Vice Chairman; Pelesky, Vice Chairman; Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Brumsickle; Carlson; Chappell; Cooke; Crouse; G. Fisher; Foreman; Grant; Hargrove; Hickel; Jacobsen;

Lambert; Lisk; McMorris; Poulsen; Reams; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Talcott; Thibaudeau and Wolfe.

Staff: Jack Daray (786-7178).

Background: The Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that states accepting federal funds provide a free and appropriate public education for all handicapped children in the least restrictive environment. The federal law requires that related services be provided if the services are needed to help a handicapped child benefit from special education. Handicapped children in Washington must have the opportunity for an appropriate education under state law, federal law, and the Washington State Constitution.

An individual education program must be developed for all special education students. Instruction in Braille is provided only for visually impaired or blind students if such instruction is required in the student's individual education program.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that literacy in Braille is essential for persons who are blind or visually impaired.

Blind and visually impaired students in the public schools are to be assessed to determine the appropriate learning media for each student. If a student's assessment indicates that Braille is the appropriate learning medium, instruction in Braille shall be provided as a part of the student's educational curriculum. If Braille will not be provided, the reason for not incorporating it in the student's individualized education program is to be documented.

A student may not be denied the opportunity for instruction in Braille solely because the student has some remaining vision.

Teachers of visually impaired students are to be qualified as determined by the State Board of Education.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (Education) Braille is essential for blind and visually impaired individuals. 70 percent of the blind are under or unemployed. Of those who are employed, 70 percent read Braille. There are no substitutes for Braille. Imagine a

world with no written language. Too many school districts are not providing Braille to students who need it.

(Appropriations) None.

Testimony Against: (Education) None.

(Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Education) Representative Don Carlson; Pauline Krauss; Gary Mackenstad, Denise Mackenstad, Susan Prows, National Federation of the Blind parent group; Bill Sellers, Assembly of Washington; Frank Cuta, United Blind of Tri-Cities; Cherie Tessier, People First of Washington; Sharon Keeran, Washington Council of the Blind; Sue Ammeter, Governor's Committee on Disability Issues; Kathleen Anderson, State Board of Education; and Dean Stenehjem, School for the Blind.

(Appropriations) None.