

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2853

As Reported By House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to the rehabilitation council for the blind.

Brief Description: Conforming the advisory council for the blind with the federal rehabilitation act.

Sponsors: Representatives Wolfe, D. Schmidt, Romero, Cairnes, Haigh and Cody; by request of Department of Services for the Blind.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/3/00 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Amends current law to reflect changes in the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee required by federal law.

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives D. Sommers, Republican Co-Chair; Tokuda, Democratic Co-Chair; Boldt, Republican Vice Chair; Kagi, Democratic Vice Chair; Campbell; Carrell; Dickerson; Eickmeyer; Kastama and Pflug.

Staff: Tracey Taylor (786-7196).

Background:

The Department of Services for the Blind operates a federal-state vocational rehabilitation program to help people who are blind and visually impaired become employed. The Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and RCW 74.18.070-100 are the federal and state laws that governed the program.

In 1998, as part of the Workforce Investment Act, the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was amended. This included the requirements for the state plans under the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Previously, the state was required to have a Rehabilitation Advisory Council. The duties of the council included delivering advice regarding the development and implementation of the state plan and strategic plan. In 1998, the name of the council was changed in the federal legislation to State Rehabilitation Council. In addition, the council duties and composition were changed. The federal government required that the states make changes to their plans to conform to federal law within one year.

Summary of Bill:

This bill amends current law to reflect those changes required in federal law. The name of the council will be changed from Advisory Council to Rehabilitation Council.

The membership of the council will be expanded to include at least one project director, at least one representative from the state educational agency, and at least one representative from the Workforce Investment Board. The representatives from the client assistance programs and the project directors are not subject to the two consecutive terms limit.

The bill allows the department to make future changes in the composition and duties of the council mandated by federal law without further legislation on the state level.

Finally, the Rehabilitation Council will have the added function of working in partnership with the department to develop, agree to, and review state goals and priorities, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and submitting progress reports to the commissioner.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The change in the name of the council moves it out of an advisory role and into more of a working partnership. Thus, the council will be more involved in the department. Expanding the membership composition of the committee will allow for additional representation required under the federal law, while still allowing the council to retain a majority of members who are blind.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Cathy Wolfe, prime sponsor; and Gary Haug, Department of Services for the Blind.