

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2853

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 24, 2000

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: Human Services & Corrections: 2/24/2000 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Long, Sheahan, Stevens and Zarelli.

Staff: Jinnah Rose-McFadden (786-7444)

Background: Under the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and RCW 74.18, the Department for the Blind (department) is required to operate a rehabilitation program to help people who are blind and visually impaired become employed.

As part of the Workforce Investment Act, the federal Rehabilitation Act was amended in 1998. The federal amendments changed state requirements. However, states were given one year to amend state law as needed.

Summary of Bill: State law is amended to reflect changes required by the 1998 federal amendments to the federal Rehabilitation Act.

The Advisory Council, a state body that advises the department on the operation of the rehabilitation program, is renamed the Rehabilitation Council.

Council membership is expanded to include at least: one project director; one representative from the state educational agency responsible for the public education of students with disabilities; and one representative from the Workforce Investment Board. Council members who represent a client assistance program or serve as a project director are exempt from the two-year consecutive term limit placed on other council members.

The director of the department may sit on the council as a nonvoting member.

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

The council must work in partnership with the department to develop and review goals and priorities. The council must also evaluate the effectiveness of the program and report its findings to the appropriate body.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This is a simple bill that brings Washington State Department for the Blind into compliance with the Federal Rehabilitation Act as amended in 1998.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Representative Wolfe, prime sponsor; Gary Haug, Director, Dept. of Services for the Blind.