

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5288

As of January 29, 2001

Title: An act relating to interpreters for the deaf.

Brief Description: Licensing interpreters for the deaf.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser, Carlson, Prentice and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions: 1/30/01.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Staff: Catherine Mele (786-7470)

Background: A 1999 sunrise review completed by the Department of Licensing concluded that the Legislature did not need to require regulation of sign language interpreters for the deaf. Despite this conclusion, there remain concerns about the lack of licensing and regulation of sign language interpreters for the deaf.

Summary of Bill: By December 1, 2003 sign language interpreters must be licensed by the Department of Licensing. By December 1, 2003 a public or private entity may not hire a person to interpret unless the department licenses the interpreter. In order to hold a license, an interpreter must be certified by the National Association of the Deaf or the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. A licensed interpreter must also pass a criminal background check.

A board of interpreters for the deaf is created. The board makes recommendations to the Director of the Department of Licensing regarding ongoing reviews of interpreter services and support systems for interpreters. In consultation with the board, the Director of the Department of Licensing must adopt rules to implement the licensing program, and establish a system to suspend and revoke licenses.

Interpreters employed by public schools must complete a 30 hour training course offered through the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Beginning in 2003, an interpreter newly employed by a public school must be licensed and complete the 30 hour program. An interpreter need not meet these requirements if the public school employs the interpreter for four or more years prior to January 1, 2003; the interpreter has not had more than six months between employment in the public school; and the interpreter has satisfactory evaluations. If a public school cannot find a licensed interpreter, it may seek a nonrenewable one year waiver from the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

There are several exclusions from licensing including volunteers, emergencies, persons interpreting for family, and interpreters in training. The law excludes persons with a current national certification who interpret for 200 or fewer hours each year.

Interpreters for judicial and administrative proceedings must also be licensed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 19, 2001.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on December 1, 2001.