

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1971

As Reported by House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to deaf education.

Brief Description: Establishing a deaf education task force.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson, Kagi, Pettigrew, Miloscia, Fromhold, Darneille, Shabro, Orcutt, Bailey, Schual-Berke and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/24/03, 3/4/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a Deaf Education Task Force to examine the roles of the Washington School for the Deaf, local school districts, and educational service districts in the education and training of hearing impaired children in the state.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Dickerson, Miloscia and Pettigrew.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Boldt, Ranking Minority Member; Roach, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey and Shabro.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

There are five educational delivery models currently available for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in Washington.

The Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) is a state agency that serves deaf and hard-of-hearing children three through 21 years of age. The WSD provides academic and

after-school programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing children living in the state at no cost to their parents or local school districts. The WSD's after-school program includes a residential component for students, from six through 18 years of age, who do not live within commuting distance of the WSD.

Multi-district programs offer education and services to deaf and hard-of-hearing students from several school districts in order to achieve economies of scale and enhance the services that can be provided for a larger number of students. School districts sending students to a multi-district program pay for the services through an inter-district contract. Transportation remains the responsibility of the sending district.

Single-district programs are offered primarily for students living in the district. There are three types of educational programs operated by individual school districts in the state:

- Teacher of the deaf programs: School districts hire one or more specially trained teachers of the deaf to provide direct instruction to deaf students, consult with mainstream teachers, and coordinate with interpreters;
- Itinerant teacher programs: Educational service districts provide a teacher of the deaf for school districts that elect to collaborate in enhancing services for their deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Itinerant teachers travel from school to school consulting with the mainstream and special education teachers who work with the students daily, offering training for interpreters, monitoring individual student progress, providing tutoring and instruction on specific skills, and serving as a resource for families; and
- Special education programs: School districts provide services for deaf and hard-of-hearing students through the special education program and do not have access to a teacher of the deaf.

Private school programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing students focus on a particular mode of communication. Students may receive consultation and assistance from a private school program but remain enrolled in a public school program.

Outreach services are intended to supplement the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Although a wide range of initiatives fall within the definition of outreach, most fall within one of the following categories: early intervention, interpreter training, student assessment and evaluation, teacher training and consultation, and special learning opportunities. The following entities are prominent in providing education outreach services: the WSD; Washington Sensory Disabilities Services (WSDS), which is a project funded by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) using discretionary federal funds for special education; educational service districts; and other community organizations.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A Deaf Education Task Force (Task Force) is established. The focus of the Task Force must be an examination of the role of the WSD, local school districts, and education service districts in the education and training of hearing impaired children in the state.

The membership of the Task Force must include the following: parents of hearing impaired children; hearing impaired adults; representatives of organizations that advocate for hearing impaired individuals; researchers on hearing impairment; individuals specializing in the education of hearing impaired individuals; and representatives of local school districts and educational service districts. The Task Force must consist of 15 members, as follows: 11 members appointed by the Governor upon the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the WSD (Board), the OSPI, the Department of Health (DOH), and private deaf education schools, three of whom must be members of the Board, including the Chair of the Board; and four members of the Legislature.

Costs of interpreter services and other necessary accommodations for the Task Force must be shared equally by the WSD, the OSPI, the House of Representatives, and the Senate. Staff support for the Task Force must be provided by the House Office of Program Research and Senate Committee Services.

The Task Force is required to develop recommendations, which must include, at a minimum, the following:

- Appropriate service delivery models for serving hearing impaired children throughout the state;
- The role of the WSD in the development of quality services for hearing impaired children throughout the state and in the provision of direct and indirect services to hearing impaired children both on campus and in the children's local communities; and
- The respective roles of, and the relationship among, the WSD, local school districts, and educational service districts in the delivery of effective education to hearing impaired children throughout the state.

The Task Force is required to report to the Governor and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature no later than December 1, 2004. The Task Force expires on January 1, 2005.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The focus of the Task Force is expanded to an examination of not only the role of the WSD, but also the roles of local school districts and educational service districts in the education and training of hearing impaired children in the state. Representatives of educational service districts are added to the membership of the Task Force. The 11 members of the Task Force appointed by the Governor must be upon the recommendation not only of the Board, but also upon the recommendations of the OSPI, the DOH, and private deaf education schools. Of those 11 members, three must be members of the

Board, including the Chair of the Board. The costs of interpreter services and other necessary accommodations for the Task Force must be shared equally by the WSD, the OSPI, the House of Representatives, and the Senate. Staff support for the Task Force must be provided by the House Office of Program Research and Senate Committee Services. The Task Force is required to develop recommendations, rather than a strategic plan for the WSD. Within the specified minimum recommendations, which are identified as minimum elements to be included in the strategic plan in the original bill, the role of the WSD in relation to local school districts and other partners throughout the state is replaced by the respective roles of, and the relationship among, the WSD, local school districts, and educational service districts in the delivery of effective education to hearing impaired children throughout the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support) (Original substitute) There is a patchwork quilt of education services available for deaf and hard-of-hearing children in the state. The availability of services varies across the state. This Task Force, with the involvement of the Governor and the Board, will address these issues.

(With concerns) (Original substitute) There have been five studies in three years on the WSD. These studies did not involve the deaf community or the Board. The Task Force would involve both the deaf community and the Board and would require the development of recommendations, which is important. The bill does not include resources for interpreters.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor.

(With concerns) Duane Sommers and Larry Swift, Washington School for the Deaf.