

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1971

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As of March 28, 2003

**Title:** An act relating to deaf education.

**Brief Description:** Establishing a deaf education task force.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Dickerson, Kagi, Pettigrew, Miloscia, Fromhold, Darneille, Shabro, Orcutt, Bailey, Schual-Berke and Kenney).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Education: 4/1/03.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** Federal and state laws require the state to ensure that appropriate special education and related services are provided to children with disabilities who are eligible to receive them and ensure the availability of a continuum of educational placements.

In 2001, the Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to examine the Washington State School for the Deaf (WSD) and other educational placements or models that provide education and services for deaf and hard of hearing students. The institute's June 2002 report describes five models available to Washington students: (1) WSD, which serves students from across the state and provides a residential program; (2) multi-district programs, which serve students from several school districts in order to achieve economies of scale and to enhance the services that can be provided for a larger number of students; (3) single district programs, which serve primarily students from the district; (4) private school programs (two in Washington and one in Oregon that enrolls Washington students), which focus on a particular mode of communication; and (5) outreach services, which include early intervention, interpreter and teacher training, student assessment, and special learning opportunities, which are provided by WSD, Washington Sensory Disabilities Services, Educational Service Districts (ESDs) and other community organizations.

The institute compared the learning environments, effectiveness, and operating costs of the five models. The institute concluded that there is no definitive evidence that a particular instructional setting or mode of communication is more likely to be academically beneficial or effective for students. Additionally, the institute found that the overall cost to the state for WSD is higher than the cost for public schools, partly due to how WSD is funded, which is through a biennial appropriation that does not fluctuate with the number of enrolled students.

**Summary of Bill:** A 15-member Deaf Education Task Force is established to examine the roles of WSD, local school districts, and ESDs in the education and training of hearing

impaired children in the state. The members of the task force must include: 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 ESDs. Eleven of the members are appointed by the Governor upon the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of WSD, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Department of Health, and private deaf education schools. Three of the appointees must be members of the WSD Board, including the chair of the board. The other four members must be legislators.

The cost of interpreter services and other necessary accommodations for the task force is shared equally by WSD, OSPI, the House of Representatives, and the Senate. Staff support for the task force is provided by the House Office of Program Research and Senate Committee Services.

The task force must develop recommendations on the following: (1) the appropriate service delivery models for serving hearing impaired children throughout the state; (2) the role of WSD in developing quality services for hearing impaired children throughout the state and providing direct and indirect services to the hearing impaired; and (3) the respective roles of, and the relationship among, WSD, local school districts, and the Educational Service Districts in the delivery of effective education to hearing impaired children throughout the state. The task force must report to the Governor and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2004. The task force expires on January 1, 2005.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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