

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6605

---

---

As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, January 30, 2006  
Ways & Means, February 7, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to educational interpreters for hearing-impaired students.

**Brief Description:** Regarding educational interpreters for hearing-impaired students.

**Sponsors:** Senators Fraser, Oke, Fairley, Deccio, Franklin, Rasmussen and Kline.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/27/06, 1/30/06 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/6/06, 2/7/06 [DPS(EKHE), DNP, w/oRec].

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6605 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Higher Education; Weinstein, Vice Chair, Early Learning & K-12; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

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

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6605 as recommended by Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Fairley, Kohl-Welles, Pridemore, Rockefeller and Thibaudeau.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Brandland and Pflug.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Parlette and Schoesler.

**Staff:** Bryon Moore (786-7726)

**Background:** In 2003, the Legislature passed a bill directing the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to conduct a comprehensive study of the qualifications and

competencies required of educational interpreters who assist deaf and hearing-impaired students. Seven recommendations were made:

- 1) Adopt a statutory definition that educational interpreters are school district employees providing sign language translation and providing further explanation of concepts introduced by the teacher for students who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing;
- 2) Pass legislation requiring school districts have all educational interpreters assessed via the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) and written test within three to four year. Provide training to those who score below a 3.6 level and do not pass the written assessment. Exempt educational interpreters from the requirement if they hold national certification;
- 3) Join the partnership that provides the EIPA and written test;
- 4) Create a new Educational Staff Associate certificate for educational interpreters that meet certain requirements;
- 5) Provide state funding to implement a bachelor's degree in Educational Sign Language Interpreter Training program in Washington;
- 6) Form an advisory committee to continue advisement in the area of deaf education and educational interpreting in Washington; and
- 7) Develop regional program encompassing students from several school districts for the purpose of maximizing and reducing resources and cost.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The bill includes recommendations one through three and also six. "Educational interpreter" is defined. By 2010, school districts must assess all educational interpreters employed by the district. If the employee does not meet national standards, then the school district must provide training. If the employee already has national certification, then he or she is exempt from the assessment. The OSPI must join the partnership that provides the EIPA and written test for educational interpreters. An advisory committee must be established to advise the office of the OSPI, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) on issues regarding deaf education in each of the sectors.

The bill modifies the rest of the OSPI recommendations. School districts are encouraged to hire educational interpreters that are deemed qualified and have national certification. The HECB, as part of their statutory duty to assess the higher education needs of the state, must determine whether there should be a bachelor's degree program in Washington State for educational interpreters. If so, the board must encourage the appropriate institution or sector to provide such a program. The Institute for Public Policy is directed to hire a meeting facilitator to conduct a series of meetings with a broad group of stakeholders to examine the strengths and weaknesses of educational services available to deaf and hard of hearing children throughout the state. By June 30, 2007, the institute must develop recommendations that would establish an integrated system of instructional and support programs that would provide deaf and hard of hearing children the knowledge and skills necessary for them to be successful in their adult lives and the "hearing" world of work.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The study by the Institute for Public Policy is broaden beyond looking at one specified education delivery system for students who are deaf or hard of hearing to examining the current educational services and developing recommendations for an integrated system.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Testimony For:** This bill addresses the gaps in the education provided to deaf students. It is important to get better qualified interpreters for our deaf students in public schools. If a child's interpreter cannot interpret the concepts taught in the classroom then the child's learning is negatively impacted. We are leaving these children behind because they do not have access or have only limited access to the verbal educational information provided in our schools because too many interpreters are under-qualified. When the interpreter is under-qualified, the child cannot fully participate in their own education. It is just like when there is not an interpreter at hearings such as this. Those who are deaf cannot fully participate. Washington is one of 21 states that does not have competency standards for educational interpreters. We should join the 29 states that do. This bill will help deaf children and the interpreters of those children.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testimony Other:** We support the definition provided in the bill, the EIPA being used for testing interpreters, the creation of a Bachelor's degree program that could be offered through distance learners, and the sections of the bill that address competencies for interpreters. However, Section 5 addresses service delivery of educational services to deaf students. It is a complicated and potentially very expensive issue. We don't want to lose the other provisions of the bill because this section causes concerns. Additionally, there should be a more comprehensive study of service delivery than just one model. If a study is done then it should involve people who work daily with deaf children, including educators.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Todd Reeves, Superintendent, Washington School for the Deaf; Larry Swift, board member, Washington School for the Deaf; Lorraine Maida, Tacoma School District; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Christy Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; and Larry Petersen, Washington State Association of the Deaf.

OTHER: Carol Carrothers, Washington Sensory Disabilities Services; Robin Taylor, Washington Sensory Disabilities Services; and Terri Thurston, Washington Sensory Disabilities Services.