

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2629

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Early Learning & Children's Services

**Title:** An act relating to the delivery of educational services to children who are deaf and hearing impaired.

**Brief Description:** Providing for the delivery of educational services to children who are deaf and hearing impaired.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kagi, Wallace, Kenney, Simpson, Ormsby, Roberts, Moeller, Goodman, Hudgins, Haigh, Fromhold, Haler, Barlow and Chase.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Early Learning & Children's Services: 1/22/08, 1/24/08 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Expands the mission of and renames the Washington School for the Deaf.
- Creates an advisory panel to plan implementation of two demonstration projects for regionally-based deaf education programs providing services in the full range of communication modalities.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Goodman, Hinkle and Pettigrew.

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

**Background:**

The Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) traces its history back to 1886 when the first facility was established in Vancouver, Clark County, by then territorial Governor, Watson Squire. In 1888 the original property was exchanged for the site where WSD sits today. In

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1906 WSD became officially known as the State School for the Deaf and Blind. Seven years later, in 1913, WSD was separated into the State School for the Deaf and the State School for the Blind. Much of the current statutory framework for operation of WSD has remained relatively unchanged since 1985.

In 2002 the Washington Institute for Public Policy (Institute) examined various models of deaf education and service delivery. In 2006 the Institute studied issues related to the governance and operation of WSD. Following that study, the Legislature appropriated \$55,000 to the Institute for the purpose of contracting with a facilitator to conduct a series of meetings with stakeholders to discuss strengths and weaknesses of educational services available to children who are deaf or hearing impaired.

In June 2007 the Institute published its report recommending that a single state agency be charged with overseeing the quality and outcomes of local, regional, and statewide schools and programs serving students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind. This recommendation represented a consensus of stakeholders.

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### **Summary of Bill:**

The Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) is renamed as the Washington State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss (Center). The currently-appointed superintendent of WSD will become the director of the Center and the board of trustees will remain the same. The governance structure of the Center will be the same as it was for WSD.

The Center's primary functions will be to:

- (1) provide statewide leadership and support for coordination of regionally-delivered deaf education services in the full range of communication modalities;
- (2) manage and supervise the state school for the deaf; and
- (3) collaborate with public and private partners in developing an applied research center for training and professional development for educators serving children who are deaf or hearing impaired.

The powers and duties of the director of the Center include all powers and duties currently defined for the superintendent of the WSD, plus the following additional duties:

- (1) providing technical assistance and administrative support to educational service districts for the regional delivery of services to students who are deaf or hearing impaired;
- (2) providing technical assistance and support as appropriate to local and regional efforts to build critical mass and communication-rich networking opportunities for children who are deaf or hearing impaired and their families; and
- (3) participating with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in providing post-high school transition planning and programming services to students who are deaf or hearing impaired.

The director of the Center will convene an advisory panel (Panel) for the purpose of implementing demonstration programs in two educational service districts (ESD) for the

delivery of education services in the full range of communication modalities to children who are deaf or hearing impaired. The Panel will consist of persons selected by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the DSHS, the Washington Association of School District Administrators, the Governor, and the Board of Trustees of the Center.

Representation on the Panel will include the OSPI Washington Sensory Disabilities Services, the DSHS Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, parents of children who are deaf or hearing impaired, an ESD superintendent, a school district superintendent, the Department of Health, the Department of Early Learning, and two non-governmental entities. Selection of panel members must be completed by May 1, 2008.

The Panel will then set its meeting schedule and develop a structure for implementing regional programs at two demonstration sites within prescribed parameters. The Panel will select and consult with two ESDs, one of which must be in Eastern Washington. By November 1, 2008 the panel will brief the Legislature on its work and identify resources and policy changes essential for full implementation and operation of the demonstration sites.

The term "School for the Deaf" is replaced with "Washington State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss" in numerous statutes.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill differs some from a similar bill heard last year by removing the provision relating to institutions of higher education and by adding a provision for parents to be represented on the advisory panel. The focus of this bill is to develop capacity of the educational service districts to support deaf education services in the various communication modalities.

The time line is ambitious, but the WSD is committed to this project. The approach in this bill is consistent with WSD's efforts to expand outreach and to partner with others. The bill will provide great support for children who are deaf and also for those with hearing loss by expanding quality services across the state. The WSD appreciates linking the post-high school transitions with the K-12 goals.

The wisdom in this bill is that it puts together existing systems that are currently in place and seeks to use our existing framework to build public-private partnerships; to build collaboration between state agencies; and to support connections with and between school districts. While the bill calls for WSD to partner with and support other entities serving children with hearing loss, it does not give the WSD authority to impose its direction on those entities. The bill is

consistent with the position of the WSD board of trustees since it was created as the governing body of the WSD. This is a vital step in improving education of children who are deaf or hearing impaired.

There is only one thing missing from this bill that is an express commitment to a goal that all children who are deaf or hearing impaired will receive educational services that will allow them to become satisfied, contributing adult citizens working in occupations consistent with their natural talents.

The current situation for Washington's children who are deaf or hearing impaired is that the type of services available to them and the communication modalities available to them are largely determined by where the child's family lives. This bill takes the first step toward addressing the significant gaps in services and needs of families. The bill would meet many of those needs through creating a unified system of deaf education and ancillary supports that would be available throughout the state regardless of what communication modality the family and child use.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Ann Curry, Children's Hospital and Medical Center, Hands & Voices Parent; Bonnie Decker and Larry Swift, Washington School for the Deaf Board of Trustees; Rick Hauan, Interim Superintendent of the Washington School for the Deaf; and Suzanne Quigley, Listen and Talk School.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.