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**Early Learning & Children's  
Services Committee**

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**HB 2629**

**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 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.

**Hearing Date:** 1/22/08

**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 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 and 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

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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.

### **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 development of an applied research center for training and professional development for educators serving children who are deaf and 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.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 21, 2008.

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