

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2813

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**As Passed House:**

February 19, 2008

**Title:** An act relating to teachers of visually impaired and blind birth to age twenty-one public school students.

**Brief Description:** Requiring an assessment of the need for teacher preparation programs for teachers of visually impaired and blind public school students.

**Sponsors:** By Representatives Quall, Upthegrove, Sullivan, Santos and Ormsby.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 1/29/08, 2/1/08 [DP].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed House: 2/19/08, 95-0.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to consider approval of out-of-state institutions of higher education for the purpose of establishing a specialty endorsement program for teaching visually impaired and blind students and to report upon both the consideration process and resulting recommendations.
- Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Board to assess the need for an in-state teacher preparation program for teachers of visually impaired and blind students and to report upon the needs assessment and associated recommendations.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Barlow, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, Lias, Roach, Santos and Sullivan.

**Staff:** Cece Clynch (786-7195).

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Background:**

*Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB).* The 20 member PESB has responsibility and authority for policy and oversight of Washington's system of educator preparation certification, continuing education, and assignment. This body establishes certification and endorsement requirements for teachers and educational staff associates.

*Endorsements.* Teachers are required to obtain a minimum of one endorsement. The type of certificate endorsements are set forth in rule, and include endorsements such as bilingual, health/fitness, special education, elementary education, and middle and secondary level subject area endorsements.

There are also "specialty endorsements" which prepare a teacher to work with a specific student population and are created to help teachers specialize beyond the required teacher certificate endorsements. These are not required for assignment of a teacher. Candidates completing "specialty endorsements" must complete a PESB approved college or university teacher "specialty endorsement" program and pass the PESB approved subject knowledge test for that specialty. Course work used to meet "specialty endorsement" requirements must be completed through a regionally accredited college or university.

In 2005 the Legislature directed that certification endorsement requirements be developed for teachers of deaf and hard of hearing. By rule effective in 2006, the PESB created a "specialty endorsement" in deaf education. (Although labeled a "specialty endorsement" it *is* required for teachers who will be working almost exclusively with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.) According to the rule, program and test requirements are waived and the deaf education "specialty endorsement" granted if a candidate possesses a baccalaureate or master's degree in deaf education from a teacher training program approved by the Council on Education of the Deaf.

*Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB).* The HECB is a 10 member citizen board that provides strategic planning, coordination, monitoring, and policy analysis for higher education in Washington. The HECB is charged by state law with representing the "broad public interest above the interests of the individual colleges and universities."

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**Summary of Bill:**

Finding that students with visual impairments and blindness benefit greatly if taught by a teacher who has been trained to understand the learning, communication, and orientation and mobility issues these students confront, the PESB is directed to consider approving out-of-state institutions of higher education for the purposes of establishing a specialty endorsement program.

By December 15, 2008, the PESB shall report to the appropriate legislative committees on the process used for such consideration. The report shall also indicate whether the PESB supports approval of out-of state institutions of higher education for the purpose of establishing a specialty endorsement program for teachers of the visually impaired and blind.

The HECB, as part of its needs assessment process, is to assess the need for in-state undergraduate or postgraduate degree programs that specialize in preparing teachers of visually impaired and blind students. If the HECB determines that there is a need for such programs, the HECB shall encourage their creation at one or more of Washington's institutions of higher education.

The HECB must report to the Legislature by August 31, 2008, with respect to the needs assessment. This report shall include recommendations concerning the appropriate level of one-time or start-up funding to support a teacher preparation program for teachers of visually impaired and blind students. The HECB shall also indicate which institutions or institutional sectors demonstrate an interest or could be successful in building and sustaining such a program. Factors to be considered in this regard include the institution's capacity to make a long-term commitment of resources and readily engage appropriately qualified faculty.

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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) There is no college or university in Washington which offers a training program for teachers of blind and visually impaired students. There is no college or university that wants to offer such a program until there is a special endorsement in place. There is a shortage of teachers trained to teach the blind and visually impaired. There are school districts with openings but no applicants. Many of the teachers who are trained are retiring in the near future. Many blind students do not have the opportunity until kindergarten to have a teacher who has been trained to teach the blind and visually impaired and, because of that, these students are not as prepared as they should be when they enter school. Blind and visually impaired students also need teachers who are trained to teach orientation and mobility skills such as crossing streets safely and navigating by bus.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Keegan Franklin and Adelia Franklin, Gold Bar; Nasue Nishida, Professional Educator Standards Board; Bob Cavanaugh and Jamie Baggett, Edmonds School District; and John Glenn, Teacher.

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