

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2629

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 25, 2008

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: Passed House: 2/13/08, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/20/08, 2/25/08 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Eide, Hobbs, Holmquist, Kauffman, McDermott, Oemig, Rasmussen, Weinstein and Zarelli.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

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. 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

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programs serving students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind. This recommendation represented a consensus of stakeholders. The report also included a recommendation that the single state agency assist school districts and educational service districts (ESDs) to regionalize services where possible.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): The Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) is renamed as the Washington State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss (Center). The Center will continue to operate the Washington School for the Deaf. 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 ESDs 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 ESDs 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 who provide education services to children who are deaf or hearing impaired. Selection of panel members must be completed by May 1, 2008.

The Panel will 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.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): The language is changed to maintain the current bargaining relationship and agreement of the current employees of the Washington School for the Deaf when they are transferred to be employees of the Center.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill lets us better serve a low-incidence population and provide a full range of communication modalities in our public schools. Because technology has improved, parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children are seeking different options and they are not universally available. This bill will establish one state-level agency that has the responsibility to coordinate the services and supporting the ESDs provide a full range of services to children throughout the state and to figure out the best way to educate our children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. There was opposition last year for a similar bill but those opposed last year have been involved in making the changes that makes this bill acceptable to that community of families and others who had concerns. This bill provides help to the system by creating collaboration between the current Washington School for the Deaf, which will become the Center, and other providers of services for deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

OTHER: Many of the current employees of the Washington School for the Deaf are covered by collective bargaining units. The current bill does not provide sufficient language to maintain the current bargaining relationship and therefore an amendment is requested.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Ruth Kagi, prime sponsor; Rick Huar, Larry Swift, Washington School for the Deaf; Maria Renninger, Hands and Voices – Washington Chapter.

OTHER: Diane Leigh, Office of Financial Management, Labor Relations Office.