

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4024

As Reported by House Committee On:
Human Services

Brief Description: Concerning a memorial petitioning for the elimination of the term "mentally retarded" in federal law.

Sponsors: Representatives Angel, Wallace, Haler and Moeller.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services: 1/27/10 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requests that the United States Congress pass a bill that requires the replacement of the terms "mental retardation" and "mentally retarded" in the federal health, education, and labor policy statutes; the terms would be replaced with "intellectual disability" and "individuals with an intellectual disability," respectively.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Dickerson, Chair; Orwall, Vice Chair; Dammeier, Ranking Minority Member; Green, Herrera, O'Brien and Walsh.

Staff: Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Background:

In 2004 the Legislature passed House Bill 2663 which required the Code Reviser to avoid references to certain words frequently used to describe individuals with disabilities. Some of the specific terms were: disabled, developmentally disabled, mentally disabled, mentally ill, mentally retarded, and handicapped.

These terms were directed to be avoided in future laws and to be replaced in existing statutes as those statutes were amended. The replacement terms were: individuals with disabilities,

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individuals with developmental disabilities, individuals with mental disabilities, individuals with mental illness, and individuals with mental retardation.

In 2009 the Legislature passed House Bill 1835 which directed the Code Reviser to replace the term "mental retardation" with "intellectual disability" in statutes, memorials, and resolutions.

In November 2009 Senate Bill 2781 was introduced into the United States Senate and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. The bill currently remains in that committee. Senate Bill 2781 requires that the terms "mental retardation" and "mentally retarded" be replaced with the terms "intellectual disability" and "individuals with an intellectual disability" in the federal health, education, and labor policy statutes.

Summary of Bill:

This House Joint Memorial petitions the United States Congress to pass Senate Bill 2781 and the President of the United States to sign the legislation into law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The term "mentally retarded" is disrespectful and degrading. Congress and the President should sign the legislation changing this term into law. Please help get rid of the "R" word. Our state is a leader in changing the "MR" word which people with disabilities see as a negative and degrading term. For too long people who were called retarded were looked down upon and thought of as second class citizens and pitied. Changing the term to individuals with intellectual disabilities will hopefully remove the negative stigma and give people with disabilities the respect they deserve.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Angel, prime sponsor; Emily Rogers, The Arc of Washington; and Heather Harper, Mike Raymond, Michael Rogers, and Shawn Latham, Self Advocates in Leadership.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.