

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5025

As Passed Senate, February 19, 2025

Title: An act relating to educational interpreters.

Brief Description: Concerning educational interpreters.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Lovick, Nobles, Salomon, Trudeau, Valdez, Wellman and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/28/25, 2/05/25 [DPS].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/19/25, 48-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) to adopt separate standards for deaf and deaf-blind educational interpreters, as necessary.
- Creates a two-tiered certificate system for educational interpreters, where limited certificates are granted to educational interpreters who have met the limited performance assessment standard and full certificates are granted to educational interpreters who have met the full performance assessment standard.
- Authorizes PESB to adopt rules limiting the number of times an educational interpreter may take an educational interpreter assessment for qualifying for a certificate.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5025 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair, K-12; Wilson, C., Vice

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

Chair, Early Learning; Harris, Ranking Member; Cortes, Dozier, Hansen, Krishnadasan and McCune.

Staff: Elena Becker (786-7493)

Background: Educational interpreters are school district employees, whether certificated or classified, providing sign language interpretation, transliteration, or both. They provide further explanation of concepts introduced by the teacher for students who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing.

Current state law requires educational interpreters employed by school districts to meet the educational interpreter assessment performance standards identified by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). PESB currently offers the following two performance assessment options:

- Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) with a minimum score of 4.0 out of 5, designated advanced intermediate; and the EIPA written test with a passing score; or
- National Interpreter Certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), and the EIPA written test with a passing score.

Educational interpreters who have not successfully achieved the performance standard, but who demonstrate satisfactory efforts to achieve the required performance standard may provide educational interpreter services for up to 18 months.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: PESB must identify both full and limited performance standards for educational interpreter assessments and must establish certificates for educational interpreters according to those performance standards.

A certificate granted to an individual who has met the full performance standard is considered a full certificate with a period of validity determined by PESB.

A certificate granted to an individual who has met the limited performance standard and has not met the full performance standard, is considered a limited certificate with a period of validity up to five years.

By the beginning of the 2027-28 school year, educational interpreters employed by school districts must have obtained a full or limited certificate. Educational interpreters who have not obtained a limited certificate but who demonstrate satisfactory efforts to achieve a full certificate may continue providing educational interpreter services up to eighteen months after taking the performance assessment or twelve months after receiving their performance assessment results.

PESB may adopt separate standards for deaf and deaf-blind educational interpreters as necessary. PESB may adopt rules to limit the number of times an educational interpreter

may take an educational interpreter assessment for the purposes of qualifying for a certificate.

By December 1, 2026, PESB must annually make data relating to educational interpreter certification publicly available.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This is an important step for expanding the workforce and ensuring deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind students receive accurate classroom instruction.

Under current law, educational interpreters can continuously take and fail the educational interpreter assessment while still working in a school setting. Right now, across the state, we have educational interpreters in schools who are not qualified.

Washington Public Schools have definitely failed to provide full access to deaf and hard of hearing students for academics. Those students are very often behind. There are studies showing that if 100 deaf students take a standardized test, three-quarters of them will fail. This cannot continue. We need to have stronger support for our children to achieve academic success.

Educational interpretation is vital not only for access to learning but also for serving as language models for deaf and hard of hearing students. Some children may be fluent in sign language while others may not have full sign language yet, or may have teachers and parents who don't know sign language. Early language acquisition is important for young children.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator John Lovick, Prime Sponsor; Shawn Broderick; Samantha Fogg, Seattle Council PTSA Co-President; Anna Corinne Huffman.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.