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SENATE BILL 6535

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State of Washington                      60th Legislature                      2008 Regular Session

By Senators McAuliffe, Tom, Hobbs, Rasmussen, and Kohl-Welles

Read first time 01/17/08. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education.

1            AN ACT Relating to teachers of visually impaired and blind birth to  
2 age twenty-one public school students; and creating new sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the state has  
5 committed to raise the achievement of all children of Washington  
6 including children with visual impairments or blindness. The  
7 legislature also finds that children with visual impairments and  
8 blindness can benefit greatly if they are taught by an educator who is  
9 trained to understand the learning, communication, and  
10 orientation/mobility issues that blind and visually impaired children  
11 encounter. Individuals who receive teacher training in educating the  
12 visually impaired and blind acquire strategies to assist students in  
13 reacting to and interacting with their environment and reach  
14 achievement levels equal to sighted children. The legislature intends  
15 to take the first steps to having such an in-state teacher preparation  
16 program for teachers of visually impaired and blind students by  
17 assessing the needs of the state in this area.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 2.**    The professional educator standards board  
2 shall consider approving out-of-state institutions of higher education  
3 for the purposes of establishing a specialty endorsement program. By  
4 December 15, 2008, the board shall report to the education committees  
5 of the legislature the process used by the board for such consideration  
6 and whether the board supports approval of out-of-state institutions of  
7 higher education for the purposes of establishing a specialty  
8 endorsement program.

9        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 3.**    (1) As part of the state needs assessment  
10 process conducted by the higher education coordinating board in  
11 accordance with RCW 28B.76.230, the board shall assess the need for  
12 baccalaureate and/or postgraduate degree programs in Washington that  
13 specialize in teacher preparation programs for teachers of visually  
14 impaired and blind students and orientation/mobility teachers in  
15 Washington's preschools, and elementary, middle, and high schools. If  
16 the board determines that there is a need for one or more programs in  
17 Washington, then the board shall encourage the appropriate institutions  
18 of higher education or institutional sectors to create such a program  
19 or programs.

20        (2) By August 31, 2008, the board shall report to the legislature  
21 on the needs assessment.        The report shall also include a  
22 recommendation on the appropriate level of one-time or start-up funding  
23 to support the educator preparation program for teachers of visually  
24 impaired and blind students and orientation/mobility teachers in  
25 Washington's elementary, middle, and high schools. Additionally, the  
26 report shall indicate which institutions or institutional sectors  
27 demonstrate an interest or could be successful in building and  
28 sustaining a high quality program, including which institutions:

29        (a) Demonstrate the capacity to make a long-term commitment of  
30 resources to build and sustain a program; and

31        (b) Can readily engage faculty appropriately qualified to develop  
32 and deliver a high quality curriculum at the baccalaureate and/or  
33 postgraduate level.

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