

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6432

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to individualized education programs for deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing children.

Brief Description: Requiring individualized education programs for deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing children to fully consider the communications needs of individual children.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, McAuliffe and Kohl).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/20/96, 2/22/96 [DPA];
Appropriations: 2/24/96, 2/26/96 [DPA(ED)].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Brumsickle, Chairman; Elliot, Vice Chairman; Johnson, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Clements; Fuhrman; Hatfield; Linville; McMahan; Pelesky; Poulsen; Quall; Radcliff; Smith; Talcott; B. Thomas; Thompson and Veloria.

Staff: Cheri Keller (786-7093).

Background: Under current federal and state law, each school district must ensure free and appropriate educational opportunities for children with disabilities. An appropriate education is an education directed to the unique needs, abilities, and limitations of the child. An individualized education program (IEP) must be developed for each child receiving special education services. The IEP is based on evaluation of the child and parental participation. Children with disabilities must be educated, to the maximum extent possible, with children without disabilities.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, in conjunction with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the state Board of

Education, and educational service districts, is instructed to conduct a study on the unmet needs of deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing students. The results of this study are to be reported to the Legislature by January 1, 1997. The study is to include recommendations regarding consolidating educational programs for these students and the feasibility of requiring certification for interpreters.

School districts must notify the Department of Social and Health Services, Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, as to the number of deaf and hard of hearing students in their districts. The purpose of the notification is to increase the availability of services to these students.

The state Board of Education, with the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, is to establish competencies for educational interpreters and adopt necessary rules. After September 1, 1998, only interpreters demonstrating these competencies may be hired as interpreters in the public schools. However, a school district may seek a waiver from this requirement if the district can show that there is no interpreter demonstrating these competencies within a reasonable distance from the school and the district submits a plan to remedy this lack of qualified interpreters. When a district seeks such a waiver, the state Board of Education must notify the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, and this office may make a recommendation regarding whether the waiver should be granted.

The bill is null and void if not funded in the supplemental budget.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The amended bill includes a provision requiring districts to notify the Department of Social and Health Services as to the number of deaf and hard of hearing students in their districts; removes the appropriation that was in the substitute bill; and stipulates that the bill is null and void if not funded in the supplemental budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: This is a good step forward to provide an equal education to deaf and hard of hearing students. Currently, interpreters in many schools are not adequate. As a result, many deaf and hard of hearing children are receiving substandard educations. This state must ensure that all children receive adequate instruction. For this to occur we need certification for interpreters.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Fraser, prime sponsor; Leon Curtis, Department of Social and Health Services; Sandra Carr and Thomas Denis, Eastern Washington Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing; and Gary Mann, Central Washington Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Education. Signed by 28 members: Representatives Huff, Chairman; Clements, Vice Chairman; H. Sommers, Ranking Minority Member; Valle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Brumsickle; Carlson; Chappell; Cooke; Crouse; Dellwo; Dyer; Foreman; Hickel; Jacobsen; Kessler; Lambert; Linville; McMorris; Poulsen; Reams; Rust; Sehlin; Sheahan; Silver; Smith; Talcott and Wolfe.

Staff: Jack Daray (786-7178).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee on Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee on Education: No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: A study is needed to determine the adequacy of programs offered by school districts. Interpreters in many schools are not sufficiently trained in the appropriate languages to meet children's needs.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Kathy DeWitt, citizen; Lois Hoover, Vice President, Thurston County Association of the Deaf; and Mat Burns, citizen with interpreter Leon Curtis, Department of Social and Health Services.