

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6432

As Passed Senate, February 10, 1996

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: 1/19/96, 2/1/96 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 2/10/96, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6432 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Goings, Vice Chair; Finkbeiner, Hochstatter, Johnson, Pelz and Rasmussen.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Under current federal and state law, each school district must ensure a free and appropriate educational opportunity for children with disabilities. The appropriate education must be designed to meet the unique needs, abilities, and limitations of the child. An individualized education program (IEP) must be developed for each child who receives special education services. The IEP is based on assessment analysis and parental participation. Children with disabilities must be educated to the maximum extent appropriate, with children without disabilities.

Summary of Bill: The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, OSPI, the State Board of Education and the Education Service Districts must conduct a study and report to the Legislature on the unmet needs of deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing students in public K-12 schools.

The State Board of Education with the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services must establish competencies for educational interpreters for the deaf.

After September 1, 1998, only qualified educational interpreters that demonstrate the competencies may be used as educational interpreters for students in public schools.

A school district may seek a waiver from the State Board of Education competency requirements. The district must show that there is no educational interpreter within a

reasonable distance, and a plan to remedy the lack of qualified educational interpreters who can provide services in the school district.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 1996.

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

Testimony For: Many deaf children are not successful in school. Many of their needs are not met. The school districts that have a large number of deaf students usually provide appropriate deaf education. The problem is when a district has only a few deaf students. One big problem is that interpreters used in schools are unqualified or underqualified. Another problem is that the sign language used by the interpreter is not the sign language understood by the deaf student.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Karen Fraser, prime sponsor; Leon Curtis, Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing; James Morris, parent; Tonya Michelson, DSHS; Kathy DeWitt, parent; Jessica DeWitt, deaf student.