

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1709

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 26, 2014

Title: An act relating to training for volunteer foreign language interpreters in K-12 public schools.

Brief Description: Requiring a study to develop a state foreign language education interpreter training program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Dahlquist, Santos, Magendanz, Moscoso, Fagan, Ryu, Maxwell, Pollet and Bergquist).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/18/14, 84-14.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/26/14 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Litzow, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; McAuliffe, Ranking Member; Rolfes, Assistant Ranking Member; Billig, Cleveland, Fain, Hill and Mullet.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Brown and Rivers.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: Every school district must make available instruction to achieve competency in English to each student whose primary language is one other than English and whose English language skills are sufficiently deficient to impair learning. According to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), 94,176 students in May 2013 were English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in the state-funded Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program (TBIP). This represents 9 percent of total student enrollment. Additionally, OSPI reports that students across the state in TBIP spoke more than 200 different languages.

The OSPI website contains a variety of information regarding communication with Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents and families that can be used by school districts or parents. There are samples of translated notices from districts to parents and translated resources for

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parents on topics such as special education, health and safety, student and parent rights, and graduation requirements. OSPI has also issued guidance to school districts regarding a district's responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to provide LEP parents and families access to vital school information in a language they can understand.

The Washington State Department of Enterprise Services has a contract with three telephone-based interpreter services that provide 24-hour, seven-day-per-week interpretation in more than 170 languages. School districts may participate in the state contract.

The Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) was established in 2006 to serve as an independent resource for parents and families regarding their involvement with public schools. OEO does not represent parents, but does respond to complaints and attempts to mediate concerns with school officials. OEO also reports regularly to the Legislature and participates in various state efforts to support family engagement in education.

Summary of Bill: OEO must conduct a feasibility study for development of a state foreign language education interpreter training program designed to create a pool of trained interpreters for public schools, including volunteer interpreters. OEO must submit the study to the legislative education committees by February 1, 2015. The study must include the following:

- an overview of the current need and availability of these interpreters;
- current practices for schools to provide these interpreters;
- an inventory of interpreter training programs in Washington and examples from other states;
- an examination of applicable federal and state laws that apply to provision of interpretation in public schools, including family and student privacy laws and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and
- an inventory of community resources for interpreter training, including for volunteer interpreters.

The bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It is important for students to have interpreters when they are not proficient in speaking and understanding English in order to level the playing field for all students and help all our students to be successful. It is also important to assist families whose primary language is not English to communicate with their child's school. The feasibility study will provide us with data to understand the size of the need for interpreters and the current availability of interpreters.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Dahlquist, prime sponsor; Stacy Gillett, OEO.