

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5905

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As of February 20, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to special education services and programs.

**Brief Description:** Concerning special education services and programs.

**Sponsors:** Senators McAuliffe and Billig.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/16/15.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** To comply with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) has established by rule the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC). The Council advises SPI on all matters related to special education.

The Governor's 2015-17 budget provided the following:

- \$300,000 for the biennium for SPI, with SEAC, to develop and support a best practices clearinghouse for special education instructional strategies for parents, schools, and districts; and
- \$500,000 for the biennium for SPI to train an additional 20 leaders per year in special education administration at the University of Washington-Bothell.

**Summary of Bill:** SEAC is formally established in state law to help facilitate the provision of special education and related services to meet the unique needs of special education students. SEAC is given specific duties, including the following:

- advising SPI on the development and support of a best practices and model programs clearinghouse for special educational instructional strategies to be made available to parents, schools, and school districts;
- monitoring the development and five-year phase-in of a plan to achieve state-identified measurable results; and
- reporting to SPI in December 2017 and 2019 with recommendations for making systemic changes to improve academic and postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities.

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

SPI must staff staff SEAC and disseminate the SEAC report and recommendations to the Governor and Legislature. SPI is authorized to adopt rules, as necessary.

SPI must provide training of an additional 40 leaders in special education administration at the University of Washington-Bothell in the 2015-17 biennium.

**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: The Office of the Ombuds in its November report recommended creating a Blue Ribbon Commission to identify obstacles to improving outcomes for students with disabilities. But the existing advisory council to OSPI is the appropriate group to identify research-based best practices for serving students who need a special education, which will improve the outcomes for these students. This bill supports some of the other recommendations of the Ombuds, including making systemic changes and identifying successful models for education and service delivery, and improving coordination of early learning through postsecondary education and career preparation. Additionally, the bill will increase the number of well-trained special education administrators.

CON: The outcomes for special education students are dismal and too many of their needs go unaddressed. We cannot continue to rely on the existing models in our school districts or OSPI to provide an appropriate education for students with disabilities. Parents have no confidence in the current system and we need new and different options in order to get different results. Too often parents are put in adversarial positions with the schools when they are only trying to get the best education for their children. There is a lack of capacity, knowledge, and will in the system to get the job done. The historical focus on regulatory compliance is not enough. Our state system is outdated and siloed. We need to bring someone in from the outside to look at the entire system and to bring the stakeholders together like OEO did to create a concerted effort around changing and improving educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Doug Gill, OSPI.

CON: Lynne Tucker, special education policy advocate; Beth Sigall, Barbara O'Kelly, Samuel Morley, Teresa Schulz, citizens.