
Higher Education Committee

HB 2676

Brief Description: Providing for training teachers for the deaf.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Shabro, Dickerson, Morrell, Chase, Romero, Kagi and Lovick.

Brief Summary of Bill
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subject to appropriation, creates competitive grants administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) for higher education institutions to develop education programs for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing.

Hearing Date: 1/30/04

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

There are approximately 500 deaf and 1,000 hard-of-hearing students aged three through 21 in Washington who require special education. An unknown additional number of deaf or hard-of-hearing children are served through birth-to-three programs. These students rely on a variety of different modes of communication, such as oral communication, American Sign Language, Signed English, or total communication. How these students are taught also varies, whether through early intervention services, in classrooms with other deaf and hard-of-hearing students, or in classrooms with hearing students. More than 80 percent of deaf and 99 percent of hard-of-hearing students are educated in public schools.

Relatively few school districts have a sufficient number of deaf students either in the district or from nearby districts to hire specially trained teachers of the deaf. Several educational service districts provide itinerant teachers of the deaf who travel from school to school. A teacher of the deaf is someone with a degree, usually at a master's level, or certification in deaf education. In Washington, there is no special certification or teaching endorsement for teachers of the deaf. No teacher preparation program in Washington offers special training for teachers of the deaf.

During the 2003 legislative interim, the House Children and Family Services Committee convened a Work Group on Deaf Education in Washington. One of the work group's recommendations was to "provide incentives for institutions of higher education in the state to establish educational programs for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing that span the spectrum of communication and educational options."

Summary of Bill:

Subject to legislative appropriation, the HECB may award competitive grants to public institutions of higher education, or consortia of institutions, to develop education programs for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing.

Guidelines for grant proposals include developing interdisciplinary curricula that cover the full range of communication options and education for deaf and hard-of-hearing children; using service delivery models that reach future and current teachers across the state in a cost-effective manner; incorporating the curricula into teacher preparation and in-service programs; and addressing the needs of both classroom teachers and itinerant teachers.

Priority will be given to proposals from consortia of institutions and proposals with the greatest potential to reach a maximum number of teachers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.