

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5810

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As of January 31, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to clarifying the collective bargaining unit for interpreters providing language access services to certain state agencies.

**Brief Description:** Clarifying the collective bargaining unit for interpreters providing language access services to certain state agencies.

**Sponsors:** Senators Saldaña, Valdez, Lovick, Dhingra, Holy, Robinson, Conway, Hasegawa, Hunt, Keiser, Nguyen, Nobles, Salomon, Trudeau and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor & Commerce: 1/11/24, 1/23/24 [DPS-WM, DNP, w/oRec].  
Ways & Means: 2/02/24.

**Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill**

- Removes references to appointments from the statutes relating to collective bargaining for language access providers providing services for the Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Children, Youth, and Families, and Medicaid enrollees.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5810 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Conway, Vice Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; Hansen, Schoesler and Stanford.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senator MacEwen.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

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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 part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Signed by Senators King, Ranking Member; Braun.

**Staff:** Jarrett Sacks (786-7448)

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Amanda Cecil (786-7460)

**Background:** Employees of cities, counties, and other political subdivisions of the state, bargain their wages and working conditions under the Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA). Language access providers also have collective bargaining rights under PECBA.

A language access provider is any independent contractor who provides spoken language interpreter services whether paid by a broker, language access agency, or the respective department:

- for Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) appointments, Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) appointments, Medicaid enrollee appointments, or who provided these services on or after January 1, 2011, and before June 10, 2012;
- for Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) authorized medical and vocational providers who provided these services on or after January 1, 2019; or
- for state agencies who provided these services on or after January 1, 2019.

Managers and employees of brokers or language access agencies are not language access providers for the purposes of collective bargaining.

Language access providers may form three different statewide bargaining units, which include:

- providers for DSHS appointments, DCYF appointments, or Medicaid enrollee appointments;
- providers for injured workers or crime victims receiving benefits from L&I; and
- other providers for any state agency through the Department of Enterprise Services.

**Summary of Bill (First Substitute):** References to appointments are removed from the statute relating to the appropriate bargaining unit for spoken language interpreters providing services for DSHS, DCYF, and Medicaid enrollees, so the appropriate bargaining unit is a statewide unit of language access providers who provide spoken language interpreter services for DSHS, DCYF, or Medicaid enrollees.

The definition of language access provider is also modified to remove references to appointments. The dates in which an individual must provide services to DSHS, DCYF, and Medicaid enrollees to be considered a language access provider is changed to on or after January 1, 2011, rather than between January 1, 2011 and June 10, 2012. The date after

which an individual must provide services to other state agencies to be considered a language access provider is changed from January 1, 2019, to January 1, 2023.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY LABOR & COMMERCE COMMITTEE (First Substitute):**

References to appointments in the definition of language access provider are removed. The dates when an independent contractor must provide interpreter services to be considered a language access provider for the purposes of collective bargaining are modified.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on December 15, 2023.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Labor & Commerce):** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: There is a growing need for interpreters in recent years and the workforce is generally invisible. Agencies have done a good job providing interpreters to people who need those services. The bill is not expanding who can collectively bargain, it is clarifying an ambiguity in the law related to bargaining units. Newer bargaining units do not use the term appointment, so there is confusion around the statutes that use the term.

**Persons Testifying (Labor & Commerce):** PRO: Senator Rebecca Saldaña, Prime Sponsor.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Labor & Commerce):** No one.