

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5458

AS PASSED SENATE, JUNE 27, 1991

Brief Description: Establishing regional service centers for the deaf.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators L. Smith, Jesernig, Bauer and Newhouse).

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators West, Chairman; L. Smith, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Johnson, L. Kreidler, and Niemi.

Staff: Lisa Hoffman (786-7483)

Hearing Dates: February 27, 1991; February 28, 1991

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5458 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McDonald, Chairman; Craswell, Vice Chairman; Bailey, Bauer, Bluechel, Cantu, Gaspard, Johnson, L. Kreidler, Matson, Metcalf, Murray, Newhouse, Niemi, Owen, Rinehart, Saling, L. Smith, Talmadge, West, Williams, and Wojahn.

Staff: Judy Fitzgerald (786-7715)

Hearing Dates: March 8, 1991; March 11, 1991

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

BACKGROUND:

Communications may present barriers to deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens seeking or receiving educational or human services in Washington.

Currently, five local deaf service centers in Washington provide advocacy services, referrals to existing programs and services and act as an information clearinghouse for service providers and deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. These centers are located in Yakima, Spokane, Vancouver, Seattle and Tacoma and receive funding from a variety of public and private sources.

Some members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community report that deaf service centers should be provided statewide in

order to assure quality human services for all deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens throughout the state.

SUMMARY:

The Legislature intends, within available resources, to provide quality human services to deaf and hard-of-hearing citizens by training service providers, ensuring communication accessibility via interpreters and other information services and coordinating between the public and private organizations which serve these citizens.

Five regional centers are established according to specified regional designations. These centers must be legally established nonprofit organizations and meet criteria established by the Office of Deaf Services. Each regional service center must establish an advisory committee composed of voting members of the center's board of directors. Advisory committees must meet regularly.

The State Advisory Committee for State Programs for the Deaf is established. The committee includes the following representatives: one individual from the Office of Deaf Services and each regional service center, and two representatives of each regional advisory committee. The Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services may designate other committee members to represent, by vote or membership, the program development interests of the regional advisory committee, the Office of Deaf Services, and the regional service centers. The state advisory committee must monitor and report to the Office of Deaf Services regarding the regional service centers programs and activities on a quarterly basis.

The Office of Deaf Services, in consultation with the State Advisory Committee for State Programs for the Deaf, must establish criteria for and recommend programs to regional service centers. The Office of Deaf Services must award contracts to qualified regional service centers.

The regional service centers are prohibited from rendering services provided by licensed hearing aid dispensers but may distribute lists of licensed hearing aid dispensers to deaf or hard of hearing persons.

The Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services is authorized to appoint a deaf and hard of hearing advisory committee or council if required by law. In addition to existing requirements, all DSHS advisory committees or councils must have appropriate geographical representation.

A null and void clause is included and the bill is made contingent upon funding in the budget.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR (Health & Long-Term Care):

Enhanced funding and support for regional service centers for the deaf and hard of hearing would allow improved access to quality educational and human services and would help break down existing communication barriers for deaf and hard of hearing citizens.

TESTIMONY AGAINST (Health & Long-Term Care):

The bill does not clearly outline a role for grassroots representation from hearing impaired citizens. Regional service center criteria are not clearly defined to avoid duplication of existing services.

TESTIFIED (Health & Long-Term Care): Jan Divorne-McGee, Washington Hearing Aid Society (pro); Thelma Struck, DSHS; Tom Casey, Grange (pro); Jack Busenbark (pro); Linda McLeod, TACID (pro); Gary Mann, Central Washington Services Center for Deaf (pro); Yvonne Rivers, Spokane Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (pro); Sharon Schlra-Layton, Tacoma Area Coalition of Individuals with Disabilities (pro); Vincenzo Gulotta, Washington Association of the Deaf (pro); Genevieve Bailey, CWSCDHH (pro); Janet Johanson, Community Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (pro); Marjorie Brookshire, CWSCDHH (pro); Mike Izak, Washington Association of the Deaf (con)

TESTIMONY FOR (Ways & Means):

Regional service centers are needed to provide support to the state's deaf community. Services coordinated and provided through the regional centers could include interpreters and TDD communication devices. The deaf community needs services beyond those provided through the School for the Deaf.

TESTIMONY AGAINST (Ways & Means): None

TESTIFIED (Ways & Means): PRO: Janet Johanson, Allie Joiner, Jennine Hall, David Rutherford, Sharon Schira-Layton, Benny Docktor, Joe E. Stotts, Allen Forbes, Jim Morris, John W. Buckley, Vincenzo A. Gulotta, Gary Mann, Yvonne Rivers, Linda McCloud, Glenn Stokesberry