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**Education Committee**

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**SSB 5105**

**Brief Description:** Ensuring the quality and availability of educational interpreters.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Fraser, B. Sheldon, Carlson, McAuliffe and Kohl-Welles).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Professional Educator Standards Board to review and recommend options designed to increase and maintain the quality and availability of educational interpreters who assist deaf and hearing impaired students.

**Hearing Date:** 3/26/03

**Staff:** Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

**Background:**

By law, the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the Department of Social and Health Services (ODHH) must maintain lists of persons who are certified by the state or by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf to interpret for deaf and hearing impaired persons. These lists may also be maintained by community centers that operate interpreter referral services. The ODHH contracts with seven community service centers around the state to provide advocacy, sign language interpreter information, education and workshops, information and referral, counseling, outreach and support services for clients and their families. Currently, there are approximately 14,000 profoundly deaf and 200 deaf-blind citizens in Washington.

The Higher Education Personnel Board has adopted qualifications for educational interpreters who provide sign language and oral interpretation for deaf and hard of hearing college students. There are three classifications for Deaf Interpreters. The qualifications include education and experience requirements. In addition, an assessment may be required of all interpreters.

There are 454 deaf students and 970 hearing impaired students in the K-12 system. Currently, there are no standardized qualifications required of educational interpreters who provide sign language interpretation to deaf and hearing impaired K-12 students.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) must review and make recommendations on several options to increase and maintain the quality and availability of educational interpreters. The options include: requiring national or state certification; designating educational interpreters as educational staff associates; requiring the State Board of Education (SBE) to establish competencies for educational interpreters; requiring the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to partner with higher education to provide a training program for deaf interpreters through video conferences, on-line courses, and face-to-face classes, and other options deemed viable by the PESB. By November 30, 2004, the PESB will report its findings and recommendations to the Governor, Legislature, the OSPI, and the SBE.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not Requested.

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