

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5105

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 26, 2003

Title: An act relating to educational interpreters.

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

Sponsors: Senators Fraser, B. Sheldon, Carlson, McAuliffe and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 2/4/03, 2/26/03 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5105 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Johnson, Chair; Carlson, Eide, Finkbeiner, McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Schmidt.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) has advisory responsibilities on educational issues, including certification issues. Currently, there is no requirement for educational interpreters, who provide sign language interpretation to deaf and hard of hearing students, to be certified or to meet standardized qualifications or competencies.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The PESB must review and make recommendations on several options to increase and maintain the quality and availability of educational interpreters, including: requiring national or state certification, designating educational interpreters as educational staff associates, requiring the State Board of Education to establish competencies for educational interpreters, requiring the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction 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.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill adds another option for the PESB to study: requiring the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to partner with higher education to provide a training program for deaf interpreters through video conferences, on-line courses and face-to-face classes. A technical correction is made to correct terminology.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 4, 2003.

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

Testimony For: It is past time for someone to carefully look at the issue of increasing and maintaining the quality of deaf interpreters so that all deaf students can become successful in school. Currently, there are no standards that must be met to become an educational interpreter. This results in a wide range of abilities among interpreters: some have spent their own money to obtain national certification; others have little or no training. As a result, too many deaf children are unable to access an education because they do not have an interpreter with the necessary skills. All of a deaf child's formal education comes through that one person, the interpreter. It is essential that the interpreter has the highest quality of skills so that the child can have a true opportunity to learn. In 1996, the State Board of Education created competencies for Braille instructors, and perhaps that process might provide a model for this one. Concerns: This task is not part of the core mission of the PESB and would require additional time and resources for the PESB.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Terri Thurston, Carol Carrothers, Washington Sensory Disabilities Services; Robin Taylor, North Central Educational Service District; Larry Davis, SBE; Denise Marychild, Washington School for the Deaf; Doug Nelson, PSE; PRO W/CONCERNS: Jennifer Wallace, Professional Education Standards Board; Lucinda Young, WEA; Greg Williams, OSPI.