

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2246

---

---

As of March 27, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to the delivery of educational services to children who are deaf and hearing impaired.

**Brief Description:** Providing for the delivery of educational services to children who are deaf and hearing impaired.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Haler, Fromhold, Wallace, Kenney, Dickerson, Morrell, Simpson, Conway and Ormsby).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/12/07, 97-0.

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/26/07.

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** The Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) traces its history back to 1886 when the first facility was established in Vancouver, Clark County, by then territorial Governor, Watson Squire. In 1888, the original property was exchanged for the site where WSD sits today. In 1906, WSD became officially known as the State School for the Deaf and Blind. Seven years later, in 1913, WSD was separated into the State School for the Deaf and the State School for the Blind. Much of the current statutory framework for operation of WSD has remained relatively unchanged since 1985. In 2002, the Washington Institute for Public Policy (Institute) last season examined various models of deaf education and service delivery and, in 2006, the Institute studied issues related to the governance and operation of WSD. The Legislature appropriated \$55,000 to the Institute for the purpose of contracting with a facilitator to conduct a series of meetings with stakeholders to discuss strengths and weaknesses of educational services available to children who are deaf or hearing impaired. The Institute recently issued a preliminary Report on Stakeholder Views. A final report with recommendations on an integrated system of instructional support programs for children who are deaf or hearing impaired is due by June 2007. Among the improvements requested in the Institute's preliminary Report of Stakeholder Views is a designated central agency responsible for improving access to information and coordinating and expediting available services.

**Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:** The Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) is renamed as the Washington State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss (Center). The current Governor-appointed superintendent will become the director of the Center and the

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

board of trustees will remain the same. The governance structure of the Center will be the same as it was for WSD.

The Center's primary functions will be to:

- 1) manage WSD and the applied research center/lab school to be established and located at the center;
- 2) provide statewide leadership and support for coordination of regionally-delivered deaf education services in the full range of communication modalities; and
- 3) collaborate with public and private partners in development and operation of an applied research center for training and professional development for educators serving children who are deaf and hearing impaired.

The powers and duties of the director of the Center include all powers and duties currently defined for the superintendent of the WSD, plus the following additional duties:

- 1) providing technical assistance and administrative support to educational service districts for the regional delivery of services to students who are deaf or hearing impaired;
- 2) providing technical assistance and support as appropriate to local and regional efforts to build critical mass and communication-rich networking opportunities for children who are deaf or hearing impaired and their families; and
- 3) participating with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) in providing post-high school transition planning and programming services to students who are deaf or hearing impaired.

The director of the Center will convene an advisory panel (Panel) for the purpose of implementing demonstration programs in two educational service districts (ESDs) for the delivery of education services in the full range of communication modalities to children who are deaf or hearing impaired. The Panel will consist of persons selected by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the DSHS, the Washington Association of School District Administrators, the Governor, and the Board of Trustees of the Center.

Representation on the Panel will include the OSPI Washington Sensory Disabilities Services, the DSHS Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, an ESD superintendent, a school district superintendent, the Department of Health, the Department of Early Learning, and two non governmental entities. Selection of panel members must be completed by June 1, 2007. The Panel will then set its meeting schedule and develop a structure for implementing regional programs at two demonstration sites within prescribed parameters.

The Panel will select and consult with two ESDs, one of which must be in eastern Washington. By December 1, 2007, the panel will brief the Legislature on its work and identify resources and policy changes essential for full implementation and operation of the demonstration sites.

The director of the Center and the chancellor of Washington State University, Vancouver will consult with the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and other entities as appropriate to identify program development and other needs to support certification and professional development of teachers, interpreters, auditory and speech therapists, and other professionals essential to providing regional communication-rich educational programs for students who are deaf or hearing impaired.

The term "School for the Deaf" is replaced with "Washington State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss" in numerous statutes.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Technology is changing deaf education due to cochlear implants which enable the children to learn spoken English, and not just American Sign Language (ASL). Under this bill, the School for the Deaf will maintain its identity as a school using ASL and its important role as the cornerstone in the deaf community. The proposal also has the Center, as an applied research center, providing leadership for the ESDs and school districts and to partner with them to expand their offerings of services. By looking at how to organize services regionally for our deaf and hard-of-hearing students, we can eliminate duplication and continue to provide a continuum of services and a variety of language modalities because now not everyone has the same access. Families should be able to choose the communication modality and the state should then support that modality. The choice should not be made based on geographic location or transportation costs.

CON: The education of deaf students is highly factionalized. Several families are very frustrated because we feel we are being excluded from the discussions on this bill. Our state has a history of exclusion of one group or another on this issue. Technology has brought the education of deaf children into the mainstream and putting our children's education in the hands of an institution that is not in the mainstream is very concerning to us. We need a neutral party to be in charge, not the Washington School for the Deaf. The school has a role to play but it is not for everyone. The bill and the advisory council needs to support all the modalities and have a balance. We worry that it doesn't. We need to support all the deaf children. Why is this bill being done before the Washington State Institute for Public Policy research has been completed? The bill should be delayed until the research is completed.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Todd Reeves, Larry Swift, Washington School for the Deaf; Larry Peterson, Washington State Association of the Deaf; Peggy Mayer, NW School for Hearing Impaired Children; Suzanne Quigley, Listen and Talk School.

CON: Maria Renninger, mother of a deaf child; Tracy Wythe; Melanie Faulk, parent of a deaf child.