

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2813

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 21, 2008

Title: An act relating to teachers of visually impaired and blind birth to age twenty-one public school students.

Brief Description: Requiring an assessment of the need for teacher preparation programs for teachers of visually impaired and blind public school students.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Upthegrove, Sullivan, Santos and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/20/08, 2/21/08 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Eide, Hobbs, Holmquist, Kauffman, McDermott, Oemig, Rasmussen and Weinstein.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) establishes certification requirements for teachers. Teachers must be endorsed in a particular area of expertise from a list adopted by rule by the PESB. Special Education is one of the endorsements available to teachers. The PESB recently created a category of specialty endorsements that provide enhanced preparation for existing teachers. Proposed specialty endorsements will be approved by the PESB through a two-phase process. Currently, the only specialty endorsement available is for educators of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. An endorsement in the specialty area of education designed exclusively for visually impaired and blind students is not currently available.

Under current law, the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) must have an ongoing process to analyze the need for additional degrees and programs at the in-state public four-year institutions. But it is the PESB that has approval authority for courses, requirements, and other activities leading to educator certification. Currently, there are no in-state teacher preparation programs specifically for teachers of visually impaired and blind students. The closest program is at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.

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.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): The PESB must consider approving out-of-state institutions of higher education for providing specialty endorsements. By December 15, 2008, the PESB must report to the Legislature on the process used by the board to consider out-of-state institutions and whether the board supports approval of out-of-state institutions of higher education for the purposes of establishing a specialty endorsement program. As part of the state needs assessment conducted by the HECB, the HECB, in consultation with others, must assess the need for baccalaureate and post-graduate degree programs in Washington that specialize in teacher preparation programs for teachers of visually impaired and blind students and orientation/mobility teachers. If the HECB determines that there is a need for one or more programs in Washington, then the HECB must encourage the appropriate entity to create such a program. By November 30, 2008, the board must report to the Legislature on the needs assessment. The report must also include a recommendation on the appropriate level of one-time or start-up funding to support the educator preparation program. Additionally, the report must indicate which institutions or institutional sectors demonstrate an interest or could be successful in building and sustaining a high quality program. The report must also include which institutions demonstrate the capacity to make a long-term commitment of resources to build and sustain a program and can readily engage faculty appropriately qualified to develop and deliver a high quality curriculum at the baccalaureate or post-graduate level.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): The HECB must consult with interested parties who are knowledgeable about training programs for teachers of visually impaired and blind students, and the PESB when conducting the needs assessment for an in-state teacher preparation programs. The HECB needs assessment report date is changed from August 31, 2008 to November 30, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: We want all of our students to receive the best education that we can provide for them. Visually-impaired students deserve an education designed to their learning needs. Currently, there is a dearth of teachers for the visually-impaired and blind students. The PESB welcomes the timeline in the bill. The PESB has been working on this issue and an instate program has been found that is interested in starting a program. As a visually-impaired student I have experienced all levels of educational services, including receiving no services. To obtain services my family had to move to be near the services so that I would not have to be bused long distances to obtain services. A specially trained teacher can enable our students to be academically successful and it is frustrating for them when they do not have a trained teacher to meet their daily needs. Washington is one of only two states that does not recognize an endorsement for teachers of the visually-impaired.

OTHER: No body ever asked for this and that is why there is no program currently. There is flip-flopping in the bill to look outside the state and inside the state. The focus should really be on instate programs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Nasue Nishida, PESB; Nicholas Luttrell, Tabitha Smith, students; Emma Smith, parent; John Glenn, Reform of Education for the Visually-Impaired.

OTHER: Bob Cooper, Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.