

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1879

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Children's Services

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: Representatives Jacks, Kagi, Moeller, Orcutt, Wallace, Appleton and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Children's Services: 2/10/09, 2/13/09 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes the Washington State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss to provide statewide leadership in the regional delivery of education services to students who are deaf or hearing impaired.
- Creates an advisory panel to plan implementation of two demonstration projects for regionally-based deaf education programs providing services in the full range of communication modalities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Angel, Goodman and Seaquist.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120)

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

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.

Squire. In 1888 the original property was exchanged for the site where the WSD sits today. In 1906 the WSD became officially known as the State School for the Deaf and Blind. Seven years later, in 1913, the schools were separated to create the Washington School for the Deaf and the Washington State School for the Blind. Much of the current statutory framework for operation of the WSD has remained relatively unchanged since 1985.

In 2002 the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) examined various models of deaf education and service delivery. In 2006 the Institute studied issues relating to the governance and operation of the WSD. Following that study, 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 statewide to children who are deaf or hearing impaired.

In June 2007 the Institute published its report recommending that a single state agency be charged with overseeing the quality and outcomes of local, regional, and statewide schools and programs serving students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind. These recommendations represented a consensus of stakeholders.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Washington State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss (Center) is established. The WSD in Vancouver will remain as part of the Center. The currently appointed Superintendent of the WSD will become the Director of the Center and the WSD Board of Trustees will become the Governing Board for the Center. The governance structure of the Center will be the same as it was for the WSD.

The Center's primary functions will be to:

1. provide statewide leadership and support for coordination of regionally-delivered deaf education services in the full range of communication modalities;
2. manage and supervise the WSD; and
3. collaborate with public and private partners in developing an applied research center for training and professional development for educators serving children who are deaf or 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 planning the implementation of 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 and 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's Washington Sensory Disabilities Services, the DSHS's Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, parents of children who are deaf and hearing impaired, 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, 2009.

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 31, 2009, 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 term "School for the Deaf" is replaced with "Washington State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss" in numerous statutes.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill clarifies:

1. the scope of the Center as being statewide and including the residential school for the deaf in Vancouver; and
2. the day-to-day operations of the school and supervision of students will be managed by the Director of the Center or the Director's designee.

Various technical corrections are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for section 34 relating to the selection of members and convening of the Panel responsible for developing the implementation plan and reporting back to the Legislature, which takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is the result of several years of work by stakeholders to refine it and to recognize multiple interests in expanding the service delivery area of the WSD. This is the third time this bill has been heard and it is too good a bill to fail. The Washington School for the Deaf has so much to offer the rest of the state in partnerships and technical assistance and this bill will be the vehicle to promote ways to better meet the needs of more deaf children across the state. The fiscal note is minimal and only for a year to support the focused short-term work of the Panel. Allowing the Panel to do the work needed for the regional demonstration sites will finally begin to address the isolation issues facing many deaf and hard of hearing students throughout the state. The Washington Federation of State Employees is in full support of this bill and has only one concern relating to the ability to select all the panel members by June 1, 2009.

(Information only) The WSD and the OSPI have started preliminary discussions about how to move forward with this idea and we have already had some interest from the ESD in being one of the demonstration sites.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Jacks, prime sponsor; Lorna Meyers, Washington Federation of State Employees; and Lawrence Peterson.

(Information only) Rick Hauan, Washington School for the Deaf.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.