

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1709

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Education

**Title:** An act relating to training for volunteer foreign language interpreters in K-12 public schools.

**Brief Description:** Requiring a study to develop a state foreign language education interpreter training program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dahlquist, Santos, Magendanz, Moscoso, Fagan, Ryu, Maxwell, Pollet and Bergquist.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Education: 2/15/13, 1/15/14, 1/22/14 [DPS].

#### **Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Office of the Education Ombuds to conduct a feasibility study for development of a foreign language education interpreter training program and submit a report by February 1, 2015.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Dahlquist, Ranking Minority Member; Magendanz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Fey, Haigh, Hargrove, Hawkins, Hayes, S. Hunt, Lytton, Muri, Orwall, Parker, Pollet, Seaquist and Warnick.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Klippert.

**Staff:** Barbara McLain (786-7383).

#### **Background:**

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*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.*

According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), 94,176 students in May of 2013 were English Language Learners enrolled in the Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program (TBIP), representing 9 percent of total student enrollment. Data from the TBIP indicates students spoke more than 200 different languages.

The OSPI website contains a variety of information regarding communication with Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents and families that could be used by school districts or parents directly. There are samples of translated notices from districts to parents and translated resources for parents on topics such as special education, health and safety, student and parent rights, and graduation requirements. The OSPI has also issued guidance to school districts regarding their responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to provide LEP parents and families access to vital school information in a language they can understand.

The state Department of Enterprise Services has a contract with three telephone-based interpreter services that provide 24 hour, seven-day-a-week interpretation in more than 200 languages. School districts may participate in the state contract.

The Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) was established in 2006 to serve as an independent resource for parents and families regarding their involvement with public schools. The OEO does not represent parents, but does respond to complaints and attempt to mediate concerns with school officials. The OEO also reports regularly to the Legislature and participates in various state efforts to support family engagement in education.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The OEO must conduct a feasibility study for development of a state foreign language education interpreter training program designed to create a pool of trained interpreters for public schools, including volunteer interpreters. The study must include:

- an overview of current need and availability of these interpreters;
- current practices for schools to provide these interpreters;
- an inventory of interpreter training programs in Washington and examples from other states;
- an examination of applicable federal and state laws that apply to provision of interpretation in public schools, including family and student privacy laws and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and
- an inventory of community resources for interpreter training, including for volunteer interpreters.

The study is due to the legislative Education Committees by February 1, 2015.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

References to the interpreter training programs to be examined are revised to include volunteer interpreters. The examination of applicable laws specifically includes privacy laws

and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Study due dates and an agency name are updated.

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**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.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This is similar to legislation regarding interpreters for the deaf, but with a different intent. The goal is to have children who are not able to speak English gain that capability. That is different from addressing the needs of children who will never be able to access spoken language. However, it is very important for all students to have access to the same quality education as their peers. This bill starts the process with a study to identify what resources and skills are available. It could be expanded to consider certification to qualify people to serve as interpreters.

Educators know that if parents don't understand, they can't help. The study should be expanded to examine what types of staff are being hired as interpreters. If skills standards are expanded, the costs should also be considered. A study will eliminate guesses and provide supporting data.

(In support with concerns) It is appropriate to have a feasibility study housed in a neutral home. However, the study should not examine only volunteer interpreters. Currently employed interpreters have very different levels of skills. They have experience in some settings but not in others. The scope of current practice should be examined. School districts are not accessing the available telephonic language lines.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Dahlquist, prime sponsor; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

(In support with concerns) Stacy Gillett, Office of the Education Ombuds.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.