
HOUSE BILL 1623

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2019 Regular Session

By Representatives Dolan and Frame

1 AN ACT Relating to improving the availability and quality of sign
2 language interpreting provided to public school students and other
3 persons; adding new sections to chapter 28A.300 RCW; adding a new
4 section to chapter 72.40 RCW; creating a new section; and providing
5 an expiration.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that
8 educational interpreters, persons who provide sign language
9 interpretation, transliteration, or both, to elementary and secondary
10 school students who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing, perform
11 an essential educational task: They convey and explain concepts
12 introduced by the teacher to the student. If deaf and hard of hearing
13 students do not have access to an educational interpreter, they do
14 not have full access to the provided instruction.

15 (2) The legislature recognizes that the professional educator
16 standards board, in accordance with legislative directives, has
17 established performance standards that educational interpreters must
18 achieve, but that many educational interpreters have not yet achieved
19 those standards.

20 (3) The legislature also recognizes that school districts,
21 especially small and rural districts, face significant challenges in

1 hiring qualified educational interpreters, as few qualified
2 applicants apply for vacant positions. These challenges may be due,
3 in part, to the limited academic offerings that are available to
4 persons interested in becoming interpreters: Only one institution of
5 higher education offers an interpreter program and there are no on-
6 campus offerings for higher education students in western Washington.

7 (4) Finally, the legislature recognizes that legislation enacted
8 in 2009 was intended to enhance the coordination of regionally
9 delivered educational services and supports for children who are deaf
10 or hard of hearing, and to promote the development of communication-
11 rich learning environments for these children. The legislature finds
12 that actions to complete that vision remain unfinished.

13 (5) The legislature, therefore, intends to initiate a multistep
14 process of improving the availability and quality of sign language
15 interpreting provided to public school students and other persons by:

16 (a) Providing grants to increase the number of sign language
17 interpreter programs available to higher education students;

18 (b) Developing or expanding mentoring programs for educational
19 interpreters in public schools and supporting related professional
20 development opportunities; and

21 (c) Developing or expanding, in accordance with previous
22 legislative directives, regional educational opportunities for
23 elementary and secondary school students who are deaf, deaf-blind, or
24 hard of hearing.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
26 RCW to read as follows:

27 (1)(a) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this
28 specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public
29 instruction must develop an application process and award grants to
30 state universities, regional universities, the state college, and
31 community and technical colleges that offer baccalaureate degrees to
32 establish programs of study that prepare students to become:

33 (i) Educational interpreters that meet the applicable performance
34 standards of the professional educator standards board; and

35 (ii) Sign language interpreters in other employment sectors.

36 (b) In awarding grants under this section, the office of the
37 superintendent of public instruction must seek to increase the number
38 and geographic diversity of applicable programs of study and to have

1 those programs available to students beginning with 2021-22 academic
2 year.

3 (2) As used in this section:

4 (a) "State universities" and "regional universities," and "state
5 college" have the same meanings as in RCW 28B.10.016; and

6 (b) "Educational interpreters" has the same meaning as in RCW
7 28A.410.271.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
9 RCW to read as follows:

10 (1) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this
11 specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public
12 instruction must develop or expand a mentoring program for persons
13 employed as educational interpreters in public schools.

14 (2) Funds provided under this section must be used for
15 recruiting, hiring, and training persons to be employed by the
16 Washington state center for childhood deafness and hearing loss who
17 must provide mentoring services in different geographic regions of
18 the state, with the dual goals of:

19 (a) Providing services, beginning with the 2019-20 school year,
20 to any requesting school district; and

21 (b) Assisting persons in the timely and successful achievement of
22 performance standards for educational interpreters established under
23 RCW 28A.410.271.

24 (3) In recognition of the need for and benefits from professional
25 development, funds provided under this section may also be used for
26 periodic professional development for those providing and receiving
27 mentoring services.

28 (4) As used in this section, "educational interpreters" has the
29 same meaning as in RCW 28A.410.271.

30 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 72.40
31 RCW to read as follows:

32 (1) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this
33 specific purpose, the Washington state center for childhood deafness
34 and hearing loss and the office of the superintendent of public
35 instruction shall examine options for developing, expanding,
36 supporting, and coordinating regionally delivered educational
37 services in the full range of communication modalities for children
38 who are deaf or hard of hearing.

1 (2) In completing the examination required by this section, the
2 Washington state center for childhood deafness and hearing loss and
3 the office of the superintendent of public instruction must, at a
4 minimum, consult with students, parents, teachers, principals,
5 district administrators, and an association representing educational
6 service districts.

7 (3) The examination required by this section must explore:

8 (a) Options for delivering programs and services to students and
9 school district staff through a regional framework based on
10 educational service districts or other appropriate regions;

11 (b) Student and professional development programs and services,
12 by type and priority, that can be effectively delivered and supported
13 through a regional framework;

14 (c) Options for replicating current or proposed regional
15 programs; and

16 (d) Options for establishing or expanding summer learning
17 programs, family learning programs, and other programs intended to
18 create peer-oriented learning experiences for children who are deaf
19 or hard of hearing and their families.

20 (4) By November 15, 2020, the Washington state center for
21 childhood deafness and hearing loss and the office of the
22 superintendent of public instruction must submit a report to the
23 governor and in accordance with RCW 43.01.036 to the education
24 committees of the house of representatives and the senate. The report
25 must:

26 (a) Reflect an inclusive development process that considers
27 suggestions and other comments offered by persons or entities
28 consulted during the examination process; and

29 (b) Include a plan for implementing their findings and
30 recommendations, segmented into short, medium, and long-range actions
31 and goals.

32 (5) This section expires June 30, 2021.

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