

## Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 162

An act relating to American Sign Language; providing legislative findings and purpose; allowing foreign-language credits for instruction in American Sign Language; requiring notice of limitations; providing duties of the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education; providing for a task force and prescribing its duties; requiring teachers of American Sign Language to be licensed by a specified date; providing a plan for postsecondary institutions; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. American Sign Language; findings; foreign-language credits authorized; teacher licensing.—

(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS; PURPOSE.—

(a) The Legislature finds that:

1. American Sign Language (ASL) is a fully developed visual-gestural language with distinct grammar, syntax, and symbols and is one of hundreds of signed languages of the world.

2. ASL is recognized as the language of the American deaf community and is the fourth most commonly used language in the United States and Canada.

3. The American deaf community is a group of citizens who are members of a unique culture who share ASL as their common language.

4. Thirty-three state legislatures have adopted legislation recognizing ASL as a language that should be taught in schools.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature to recognize ASL as the language of the American deaf community, to authorize public and independent schools to offer ASL as a course of study, and to accept secondary-school ASL credits as foreign-language credits.

(2) AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE; FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CREDIT.—

(a) American Sign Language is a visual-gestural system of communication used by many in the deaf community living in the United States and Canada. It is a complete and complex language that has its own syntax, rhetoric, and grammar and that is used to convey information and meaning through signs made with the hands, arms, facial gestures, and other body movements.

(b) Any public or independent school may offer American Sign Language for foreign-language credit. Students taking American Sign Language for

foreign-language credit must be advised by the school board prior to enrollment in such course that postsecondary institutions outside of Florida may not accept such credits as satisfying foreign-language requirements.

(3) DUTIES OF COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION AND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION; LICENSING OF AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS; PLAN FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS.—

(a) The Commissioner of Education shall appoint a seven-member task force that includes representatives from two state universities and one private college or university located within this state which currently offer a 4-year deaf education or sign language interpretation program as a part of their respective curricula, two representatives from the Florida American Sign Language Teachers' Association (FASLTA), and two representatives from community colleges located within this state which have established Interpreter Training Programs (ITPs). This task force shall develop and submit to the Commissioner of Education a report that contains the most up-to-date information about American Sign Language (ASL) and guidelines for developing and maintaining ASL courses as a part of the curriculum. This information must be made available to any administrator of a public or an independent school upon request of the administrator.

(b) By January 1, 2005, the State Board of Education shall adopt rules establishing licensing/certification standards to be applied to teachers who teach ASL as part of a school curriculum. In developing the rules, the state board shall consult with the task force established under paragraph (a).

(c) An ASL teacher must be certified by the Department of Education by January 1, 2008, and must obtain current certification through the Florida American Sign Language Teachers' Association (FASLTA) by January 1, 2006. New FASLTA certification may be used by current ASL teachers as an alternative certification track.

(d) The Commissioner of Education shall work with providers of postsecondary education to develop and implement a plan to ensure that postsecondary institutions in this state will accept secondary school credits in ASL as credits in a foreign language and to encourage postsecondary institutions to offer ASL courses to students as a fulfillment of the requirement for studying a foreign language.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2003.

Approved by the Governor June 10, 2003.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 10, 2003.