

1                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to American Sign Language;  
3           providing legislative findings and purpose;  
4           allowing foreign-language credits for  
5           instruction in American Sign Language;  
6           requiring notice of limitations; providing  
7           duties of the Commissioner of Education and the  
8           State Board of Education; providing for a task  
9           force and prescribing its duties; requiring  
10          teachers of American Sign Language to be  
11          licensed by a specified date; providing a plan  
12          for postsecondary institutions; providing an  
13          effective date.

14

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

16

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

19

(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS; PURPOSE.--

20

(a) The Legislature finds that:

21

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

26

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

30

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

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

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

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

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

17           (b) Any public or independent school may offer  
18 American Sign Language for foreign-language credit. Students  
19 taking American Sign Language for foreign-language credit must  
20 be advised by the school board prior to enrollment in such  
21 course that postsecondary institutions outside of Florida may  
22 not accept such credits as satisfying foreign-language  
23 requirements.

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

27           (a) The Commissioner of Education shall appoint a  
28 seven-member task force that includes representatives from two  
29 state universities and one private college or university  
30 located within this state which currently offer a 4-year deaf  
31 education or sign language interpretation program as a part of

1 their respective curricula, two representatives from the  
2 Florida American Sign Language Teachers' Association (FASLTA),  
3 and two representatives from community colleges located within  
4 this state which have established Interpreter Training  
5 Programs (ITPs). This task force shall develop and submit to  
6 the Commissioner of Education a report that contains the most  
7 up-to-date information about American Sign Language (ASL) and  
8 guidelines for developing and maintaining ASL courses as a  
9 part of the curriculum. This information must be made  
10 available to any administrator of a public or an independent  
11 school upon request of the administrator.

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

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

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

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