

By the Committees on Appropriations; Governmental Oversight and Productivity; and Senators Fasano, Sebesta, Lawson, Bennett and Wise

309-2542-03

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A bill to be entitled
An act relating to the Florida Council on Deafness; creating the Florida Council on Deafness; providing membership and organization of the council; providing role, purpose, powers, duties, and responsibilities of the council; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Florida Council on Deafness.--

(1)(a) There is established the Florida Council on Deafness. The council is assigned to the Department of Education for administrative and fiscal purposes, but it shall otherwise function independently of the control, supervision, and direction of the Department of Education.

(b) The council shall consist of nine members appointed by the Governor, after consultation with statewide not-for-profit professional organizations that represent deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened individuals. The members of the council must be confirmed by the Senate. The Governor shall make appointments to the council no later than July 1, 2003. Each member shall be appointed to a term of 4 years; however, for the purpose of providing staggered terms, of the initial appointments, five members shall be appointed to a 2-year term and four members shall be appointed to a 4-year term. Any vacancy on the council shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment, and any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring because of death, resignation, or ineligibility for membership shall serve only for the unexpired term of the member's predecessor.

1 (c) The first meeting of the council shall be held no
2 later than August 1, 2003. The council members, at the
3 organizational meeting, shall elect by a majority vote of the
4 members one member to serve as chair of the council for a term
5 of 1 year. The council shall meet at least once each quarter.
6 All meetings are subject to the call of the chair. Five
7 members of the council shall constitute a quorum.

8 (d) Members of the council shall serve without
9 compensation but may be reimbursed for per diem and travel
10 expenses pursuant to section 112.061, Florida Statutes.

11 (e) Staff of the Department of Education shall be
12 assigned by the Commissioner of Education to assist the
13 council in the duties assigned to it by this section.

14 (2) It shall be the role of the council to serve as an
15 advisory and coordinating body in the state which recommends
16 policies that address the needs of deaf, hard-of-hearing, and
17 late-deafened persons and which recommends methods that
18 improve the coordination of services among the public and
19 private entities that provide services to deaf,
20 hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened persons. The council is
21 authorized to provide technical assistance, advocacy, and
22 education. To that end, the council shall:

23 (a) Provide information and assistance to the
24 Legislature.

25 (b) Provide technical assistance to other state
26 agencies.

27 (c) Provide information and referral services.

28 (d) Promote public and individual advocacy for deaf,
29 hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened citizens.

30 (e) Conduct public hearings as needed.

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1 (3) The council shall prepare a report, which shall be
2 filed with the Governor, the President of the Senate, the
3 Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Chief Justice
4 of the Supreme Court by January 1, 2004, which shall include:

5 (a) A review of state agencies to determine if they
6 are in compliance with accessibility standards as they relate
7 to services for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened
8 individuals.

9 (b) A review of federal and state statutes, rules, and
10 regulations that establish requirements that agencies must
11 comply with, including, but not limited to, equipment and
12 communication accessibility standards in the provision of
13 services to deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened
14 individuals.

15 (c) A comparison of the licensure and accreditation
16 requirements for sign-language interpreters, oral
17 interpreters, and entities providing services, both directly
18 and indirectly, to individuals with hearing loss among the 10
19 most populous states.

20 (d) Recommendations for standards for and licensure of
21 sign-language interpreters and providers of Computer-Aided
22 Real-time Translation services (CART) and other service
23 provider accreditation standards.

24 (4) The council may:

25 (a) Secure assistance from all state departments and
26 agencies in order to avail itself of expertise at minimal
27 cost.

28 (b) Obtain information and assistance from the state
29 or any political subdivision, municipal corporation, public
30 officer, or governmental department or agency thereof.

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1 (c) Apply for and accept funds, grants, gifts, and
2 services from local or state government or the Federal
3 Government, or from any of their agencies, or any other public
4 or private source and may use funds for the purposes
5 authorized by this section.

6 (5) All executive branch state agencies are
7 instructed, and all other state agencies are requested, to aid
8 and assist the council in the accomplishment of its purposes.

9 (6) Nothing in this act is intended to or shall be
10 interpreted as extending the duties or responsibilities of the
11 council to any program, service, or activity that is subject
12 to the jurisdiction or oversight of the Public Service
13 Commission.

14 Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
15 law.

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17 STATEMENT OF SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES CONTAINED IN
18 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
19 Senate Bill CS/SB 2244

20 The committee substitute removes all provisions related to the
21 Florida Commission for the Blind.
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