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A bill to be entitled
 An act relating to American Sign Language; providing legislative findings and purpose; allowing foreign-language credits for instruction in American Sign Language; 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.



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

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

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

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

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

47 (a) The Commissioner of Education shall appoint a seven-
48 member task force that includes representatives from at least
49 two state universities and one private college or university
50 located within this state which currently offer a 4-year deaf-
51 education or sign-language-interpretation program as a part of
52 their respective curricula and at least two representatives from
53 community colleges located within this state which have
54 established Interpreter Training Programs (ITPs). This task
55 force shall develop and submit to the Commissioner of Education
56 a report that contains the most up-to-date information about
57 American Sign Language (ASL) and guidelines for developing and
58 maintaining ASL courses as a part of the curriculum. This
59 information must be made available to any administrator of a



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60 public or an independent school upon request of the
61 administrator.

62 (b) By January 1, 2004, the State Board of Education shall
63 adopt rules establishing licensing/certification standards to be
64 applied to teachers who teach ASL as part of a school
65 curriculum. In developing the rules, the board shall consult
66 with the task force established under paragraph (a).

67 (c) An ASL teacher must be certified by the Department of
68 Education by January 1, 2008, and must obtain current
69 certification through the American Sign Language Teachers'
70 Association by January 1, 2004.

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

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