

HB 0227

2004

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to the Florida Council on Deafness;
 3 creating the Florida Council on Deafness; providing for
 4 the appointment of members and the organization of the
 5 council; requiring the staff of the Department of
 6 Education to assist the council in its duties; providing
 7 the role, purpose, powers, duties, and responsibilities of
 8 the council; providing an effective date.

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

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 12 Section 1. Florida Council on Deafness.--

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

18 (b) The council shall consist of nine members appointed by
 19 the Governor after consultation with statewide not-for-profit
 20 professional organizations that represent deaf, hard-of-hearing,
 21 and late-deafened individuals. The members of the council must
 22 be confirmed by the Senate. The Governor shall make appointments
 23 to the council no later than July 1, 2004. Each member shall be
 24 appointed to a term of 4 years; however, for the purpose of
 25 providing staggered terms, of the initial appointments, five
 26 members shall be appointed to a 2-year term and four members
 27 shall be appointed to a 4-year term. Any vacancy on the council
 28 shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment,
 29 and any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring because of

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30 death, resignation, or ineligibility for membership shall serve
 31 only for the unexpired term of the member's predecessor.

32 (c) The first meeting of the council shall be held no
 33 later than August 1, 2004. The council members, at the
 34 organizational meeting, shall elect by a majority vote of the
 35 members one member to serve as chair of the council for a term
 36 of 1 year. The council shall meet at least once each quarter.
 37 All meetings are subject to the call of the chair. Five members
 38 of the council shall constitute a quorum.

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

42 (e) Staff of the Department of Education shall be assigned
 43 by the Commissioner of Education to assist the council in the
 44 duties assigned to it by this section.

45 (2) It is the role of the council to serve as an advisory
 46 and coordinating body in the state which recommends policies
 47 that address the needs of deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-
 48 deafened individuals and which recommends methods that improve
 49 the coordination of services among the public and private
 50 entities that provide services to deaf, hard-of-hearing, and
 51 late-deafened individuals. The council is authorized to provide
 52 technical assistance, advocacy, and education. To that end, the
 53 council shall:

54 (a) Provide information and assistance to the Legislature;

55 (b) Provide technical assistance to other state agencies;

56 (c) Provide information and referral services;

57 (d) Promote public and individual advocacy for deaf, hard-
 58 of-hearing, and late-deafened citizens; and

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- 59 (e) Conduct public hearings as needed.
- 60 (3) The council shall prepare a report, which shall be
 61 filed with the Governor, the President of the Senate, the
 62 Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Chief Justice
 63 of the Supreme Court by January 1, 2005, which must include:
- 64 (a) A review of state agencies to determine if they are in
 65 compliance with accessibility standards as they relate to
 66 services for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened
 67 individuals.
- 68 (b) A review of federal and state statutes, rules, and
 69 regulations that establish requirements that agencies must
 70 comply with, including, but not limited to, equipment and
 71 communication accessibility standards in the provision of
 72 services to deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened
 73 individuals.
- 74 (c) A comparison of the licensure and accreditation
 75 requirements for sign-language interpreters, oral interpreters,
 76 and entities providing services, both directly and indirectly,
 77 to individuals with hearing loss among the 10 most populous
 78 states.
- 79 (d) Recommendations for standards for and licensure of
 80 sign-language interpreters and providers of Computer-Aided Real-
 81 time Translation (CART) services and other accreditation
 82 standards for service providers.
- 83 (4) The council may:
- 84 (a) Secure assistance from all state departments and
 85 agencies in order to avail itself of expertise at minimal cost.

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

89 (c) Apply for and accept funds, grants, gifts, and
 90 services from local or state government or the Federal
 91 Government, or from any of their agencies, or any other public
 92 or private source and may use funds for the purposes authorized
 93 by this section.

94 (5) All executive branch state agencies are instructed,
 95 and all other state agencies are requested, to assist the
 96 council in accomplishing its purposes.

97 (6) This act does not extend the duties or
 98 responsibilities of the council to any program, service, or
 99 activity that is subject to the jurisdiction or oversight of the
 100 Florida Public Service Commission.

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