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HOUSE BILL 1815

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State of Washington

63rd Legislature

2013 Regular Session

By Representatives Moscoso, Appleton, Dahlquist, Ryu, Roberts, Pettigrew, Takko, Maxwell, Pollet, Fey, Santos, and Tharinger

Read first time 02/11/13. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to assuring that education-related information is  
2 appropriately provided by public schools to parents with diverse  
3 cultural and linguistic backgrounds; adding a new section to chapter  
4 28A.300 RCW; and creating a new section.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that:

7 (1) The number of foreign language speakers has substantially  
8 increased in Washington's public schools over the last decade. The  
9 office of the superintendent of public instruction reports that more  
10 than eight percent of the state's total student population was enrolled  
11 in the transitional bilingual instruction program as of May 2012, and  
12 more than two hundred different languages are spoken in students'  
13 homes.

14 (2) Access to education-related information and communication in a  
15 language they can understand helps limited English proficient parents  
16 and guardians make informed decisions regarding their children's  
17 academic future. Greater participation and involvement by parents and  
18 families prevents students from dropping out of school, increases the

1 likelihood of student success in school, and contributes to closing the  
2 educational opportunity gap.

3 (3) The office of the education ombudsman reports an increased  
4 number of complaints from English language learner students and limited  
5 English proficient parents regarding lack of provision of accurate and  
6 reliable interpretation and translation services for parents, as well  
7 as having children act as interpreters during parent meetings.

8 (4) There are no certification programs in the state specifically  
9 for K-12 education language interpreters, that is, bilingual adults who  
10 are proficient in educational terminology, interpretation, and  
11 translation. The lack of qualified individuals causes public schools  
12 to use untrained bilingual adults or students themselves as  
13 interpreters for school meetings with limited English proficient  
14 parents. This practice creates an unfair disadvantage for English  
15 language learner students as their parents might not receive accurate,  
16 reliable information. Use of students in place of qualified adult  
17 interpreters also places undue burdens on young children who may not  
18 yet be fully proficient in either their native language or in English,  
19 and undermines parental authority.

20 (5) Federal laws pertaining to the elementary and secondary  
21 education act, civil rights, antidiscrimination, and migrant and  
22 bilingual education, as well as state education laws and rules, affirm  
23 the rights of parents of public school students to have access, as  
24 practicable, to education-related information in a language they can  
25 understand.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300  
27 RCW to read as follows:

28 (1) By April 15, 2014, the Washington state school directors'  
29 association, together with the office of the education ombudsman, the  
30 office of the superintendent of public instruction, and representatives  
31 of the educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability  
32 committee, parents with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds,  
33 and interested education associations, must develop a model language  
34 access policy and procedure for adoption by school districts.

35 (2) At a minimum, the policy and procedure must:

36 (a) Be aligned with federal and state laws pertaining to the rights

1 of parents and legal guardians of public school students to language  
2 access;

3 (b) Require use of adult language interpreters, not students, for  
4 school meetings with limited English proficient parents and legal  
5 guardians about high-stakes educational situations; and

6 (c) Include a manual of guidelines, local and national best  
7 practices, community resources, interpretation and translation  
8 contractual services available in the state, and electronic and  
9 telephonic services available for the provision of both oral  
10 interpretation and translation of written communications for limited  
11 English proficient individuals.

12 (3) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this  
13 section.

14 (a) "High-stakes educational situations" include but are not  
15 limited to discussions or decisions about special education, highly  
16 capable programs, disciplinary matters, truancy, harassment,  
17 intimidation, bullying, academic progress, grades and assessment  
18 scores, high school graduation, and written communication that is  
19 provided for parental approval.

20 (b) "Language interpreter" means a bilingual or multilingual  
21 individual who provides oral language interpretation for others.

22 (4) By August 1, 2015, each school district board of directors  
23 must, at a minimum, adopt the model language access policy and  
24 procedure developed under this section.

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