



Colorado Legislative Council Staff
NO FISCAL IMPACT

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Prime Sponsor(s): Rep. Hodge

Bill Status: House Education

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TITLE: CONCERNING THE TREATMENT OF AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION.

Summary of Assessment

The bill states that institutions of higher education *may* offer one or more elective courses in American sign language. The bill requires the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) to adopt the necessary policies and procedures to require higher education institutions in Colorado to treat American sign language (ASL) as a foreign language for purposes of granting and receiving academic credit. The policies would specify that:

- students enrolled at an institution that offers ASL courses may receive academic credit for the courses either by completing the courses or by demonstrating proficiency if the higher education institution gives credit for completing courses or demonstrating proficiency in any other foreign language;
- academic credit received for completing an ASL course or demonstrating proficiency may be counted towards satisfaction of any foreign language requirements of the higher education institution offering the courses; and
- the credit received may be counted toward satisfaction of the foreign language entrance requirements of a public higher education institution in Colorado.

The bill permits school districts to offer one or more elective courses in ASL. School districts would treat ASL as a foreign language and would:

- grant academic credit for completion of an ASL course or demonstrated proficiency in ASL; and
- count completion of an ASL course or demonstrated proficiency in ASL toward the fulfillment of any foreign language requirement for graduation.

Further, the bill authorizes the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind to: assist the Colorado Commission on Higher Education in formulating ASL policies; assist institutions of higher education in developing ASL courses; assist the State Board of Education in promulgating ASL rules; and assist school district boards of education in implementing ASL policies.

Colorado Commission on Higher Education. The bill requires CCHE to adopt policies and procedures to require higher education institutions in the state to treat ASL as a foreign language for purposes of granting and receiving academic credit, which they can do within existing resources. The bill does not require any institution of higher education to offer classes in American sign language. While there may be potential costs associated with specific institutions offering courses in ASL, those

institutions may already have qualified ASL instructors on staff. The institutions that responded indicate that the bill requires no additional financial resources.

Local School Districts. While the bill authorizes school districts to offer one or more elective courses in ASL, the decision to offer courses will be made at the local level within the available budgetary resources of each school district. Therefore, the bill is assessed as having no fiscal impact on school districts.

Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind. The bill authorizes the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind to assist CCHE, institutions of higher education, the State Board of Education, and school district boards of education regarding policies, rules and developing ASL courses. This assistance, if requested, would be done by the existing staff of the school

The bill would become effective August 4, 2004, unless a referendum petition is filed.

Departments Contacted

Education Colorado Commission on Higher Education