

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: SB 488

50th Legislature, 1st Session, 2011

Tracking Number: .185226.1

Short Title: Sign Language Interpreting Program Approp

Sponsor(s): Senator Nancy Rodriguez

Analyst: James Ball

Date: March 11, 2011

Bill Summary:

SB 488 makes an appropriation to the Higher Education Department (HED) for a sign language interpreting program at Santa Fe Community College (SFCC).

Fiscal Impact:

\$50,000 is appropriated from the General Fund for expenditure in FY 12. Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

Fiscal Issues:

According to the analysis of SB 488 by HED, this request was not submitted by SFCC to the department for review. HED's funding request for higher education recommends a 3.0 percent reduction for all existing appropriations for FY 12.

Substantive Issues:

HED states in its analysis of SB 488 that the appropriation would facilitate training of current and future students of sign language interpretation. The American Sign Language Interpreting Program at SFCC seeks to expand and update its technology in order to meet the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community. HED also notes that the University of New Mexico (UNM) currently utilizes a state-of-the-art laboratory for teaching sign language. The appropriation in SB 488 would expand that kind of service to students and instructors at institutions around the state through online resources.

Background:

Citing a 2003 Task Force report from the New Mexico School for the Deaf and the Public Education Department, HED states that a major problem facing New Mexico, as well as the entire nation, is a paucity of teachers, aides, interpreters, administrators, employment counselors, speech therapists, tutors, and other professionals who are fully qualified and have expertise in education of the deaf and hard of hearing and who can communicate directly and proficiently with children and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing.

HED further notes that the UNM-Main Campus is the only institution in New Mexico that grants a bachelor's degree granting institution in Sign Language Interpretation and Translation in

New Mexico. According to UNM, only 15 students are admitted each year. Graduates from the UNM program have gone onto careers as freelance interpreters, educational interpreters, full-time interpreters in the public and private sectors, and interpreters at educational agencies. Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell and SFCC both offer associate degrees in Sign Language Interpretation and Translation.

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) collects labor and work force data on interpreters and translators, not exclusively sign language interpreters and translators. DWS reports that in 2008 approximately 290 worked in the interpreting and translating occupation in New Mexico. DWS estimates that by 2018 this number will increase by approximately 23.3 percent.

Related Bills:

None as of March 11, 2011.