
HOUSE BILL 1838

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2003 Regular Session

By Representatives Dickerson, Romero, Kenney, Kagi, Moeller, Chase and Santos

Read first time 02/12/2003. Referred to Committee on Children & Family Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to providing access to a telephonic reading service
2 for blind or visually handicapped persons in the state of Washington;
3 amending RCW 74.18.020; adding a new section to chapter 74.18 RCW; and
4 creating a new section.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds and declares the
7 following:

8 (1) Thousands of citizens in the state have disabilities, including
9 blindness or visual impairment, that prevent them from using
10 conventional print material.

11 (2) Governmental and nonprofit organizations provide access to
12 reading material by specialized means, including books and magazines
13 prepared in braille, audio, and large-type formats.

14 (3) Access to time-sensitive or local or regional publications, or
15 both, is not feasible to produce through these traditional means and
16 formats.

17 (4) Lack of direct and prompt access to information included in
18 newspapers, magazines, newsletters, schedules, announcements, and other

1 time-sensitive materials limits educational opportunities, literacy,
2 and full participation in society by people with print disabilities.

3 (5) Creation and storage of information by computer results in
4 electronic files used for publishing and distribution.

5 (6) The use of high-speed computer and telecommunications
6 technology combined with customized software provides a practical and
7 cost-effective means to convert electronic text-based information,
8 including daily newspapers, into synthetic speech suitable for
9 statewide distribution by telephone.

10 (7) Telephonic distribution of time-sensitive information,
11 including daily newspapers, will enhance the state's current efforts to
12 meet the needs of blind and disabled citizens for access to information
13 which is otherwise available in print, thereby reducing isolation and
14 supporting full integration and equal access for such individuals.

15 **Sec. 2.** RCW 74.18.020 and 1983 c 194 s 2 are each amended to read
16 as follows:

17 Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in
18 this section apply throughout this chapter.

19 (1) "Department" means an agency of state government called the
20 department of services for the blind.

21 (2) "Director" means the director of the (~~state agency~~)
22 department of services for the blind. The director is appointed by the
23 governor with the consent of the senate.

24 (3) "Advisory council" means the body of members appointed by the
25 governor to advise the state agency.

26 (4) "Blind" means a person who has no vision or whose vision with
27 corrective lenses is so defective as to prevent the performance of
28 ordinary activities for which eyesight is essential, or who has an eye
29 condition of a progressive nature which may lead to blindness.

30 (5) "Telephonic reading service" means audio information provided
31 by telephone, including the acquisition and distribution of daily
32 newspapers and other information of local, state, or national interest.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 74.18 RCW
34 to read as follows:

35 (1)(a) The director shall provide access to a telephonic reading
36 service for blind and disabled persons.

1 (b) The director shall establish criteria for eligibility for blind
2 and disabled persons who may receive the telephonic reading services.
3 The criteria may be based upon the eligibility criteria for persons who
4 receive services established by the national library service for the
5 blind and physically handicapped of the library of congress.

6 (2) The director may enter into contracts or other agreements that
7 he or she determines to be appropriate to provide telephonic reading
8 services pursuant to this section.

9 (3) The director may expand the type and scope of materials
10 available on the telephonic reading service in order to meet the local,
11 regional, or foreign language needs of blind or visually impaired
12 residents of this state. The director may also expand the scope of
13 services and availability of telephonic reading services by current
14 methods and technologies that may be developed. The director may
15 inform current and potential patrons of the availability of telephonic
16 reading services through appropriate means, including, but not limited
17 to, direct mailings, direct telephonic contact, and public service
18 announcements.

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