

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1995

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HOUSE BILL 457

Short Title: Recognize American Sign Language.

(Public)

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Sponsors: Representatives Fitch; and Buchanan.

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Referred to: Welfare Reform and Human Resources.

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March 9, 1995

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO RECOGNIZE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE AS A LANGUAGE OF  
DEAF PEOPLE IN NORTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, the fourth largest group of language users in the United States and Canada is the group using American Sign Language (ASL); and

Whereas, North Carolina has over 50,000 deaf citizens; and

Whereas, American Sign Language has met the accepted criteria of having a system with relatively arbitrary symbols, grammatical signals/syntax, a community of users, and goes through historical changes to qualify it as a legitimate language; and

Whereas, many state legislatures have recognized American Sign Language as a language; and

Whereas, it is the right of every deaf person to have his own language; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. G.S. 143B-216.30 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 143B-216.30. Definitions.**

The following definitions shall apply throughout this Part unless otherwise specified:

(01) 'American Sign Language (ASL)' means a visual-gestural language that is a separate and distinct language involving the hands, arms, facial markers and body movements to convey grammatical information.

- 1 (1) 'Council' means the Council for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing of the  
2 Department of Human Resources.
- 3 (2) 'Deaf' means the inability to hear and/or understand oral  
4 communication, with or without assistance of amplification devices.
- 5 (3) 'Division' means the Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of  
6 Hearing of the Department of Human Resources.
- 7 (4) 'Hard of hearing' means permanent hearing loss which is severe enough  
8 to necessitate the use of amplification devices to hear oral  
9 communication.
- 10 (5) 'Ring signaling device' means a mechanism such as a flashing light  
11 which visually indicates that a communication is being received through  
12 a telephone line. This phrase also means mechanisms such as adjustable  
13 volume ringers and buzzers which audibly and loudly indicate an  
14 incoming telephone communication.
- 15 (6) 'Speech impaired' means permanent loss of oral communication ability.
- 16 (7) 'Telecommunications device' or 'TDD' means a keyboard mechanism  
17 attached to or in place of a standard telephone by some coupling device,  
18 used to transmit or receive signals through telephone lines.
- 19 (8) 'Volume control handset' means a telephone handset or other telephone  
20 listening device which has an adjustable control for increasing the  
21 volume of the sound being produced by the telephone receiving unit."

22 Sec. 2. G.S. 143B-216.33(a) reads as rewritten:

23 "(a) There is ~~hereby~~ created within the Department of Human Resources, the  
24 Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing. The Division ~~shall have~~ has  
25 the powers and duties including the following:

- 26 (1) To review existing programs for persons who are deaf or hard of  
27 hearing in the State, and make recommendations to the Secretary of the  
28 Department of Human Resources and to the Superintendent of the  
29 Department of Public Instruction for improvements to such programs;
- 30 (2) To provide comprehensive residential and nonresidential educational  
31 program services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, aged birth  
32 to 21 years of age. ~~Such~~ These programs shall be in compliance with  
33 the Department of Public Instruction Procedures Governing Programs  
34 and Services for Children with Special Needs, and with G.S. 115C-325;
- 35 (3) To provide a network of resource centers for local access to services  
36 such as interpreters, information and referral, telephone relay, and  
37 advocacy for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- 38 (4) To collect, study, maintain, publish and disseminate information relative  
39 to all aspects of deafness;
- 40 (5) To promote public awareness of the needs of, resources and  
41 opportunities available to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- 42 (6) To provide technical assistance to agencies and organizations in the  
43 development of services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing;

- 1 (7) To administer the Telecommunications Program for the Deaf pursuant  
2 to G.S. 143B-216.34; ~~and~~
- 3 (8) To establish training and evaluation standards for determination of  
4 competency of individuals serving as interpreters for persons who are  
5 deaf or hard of ~~hearing~~-hearing; and
- 6 (9) To establish for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, aged birth to  
7 21 years of age, training and certification of programs to promote  
8 American Sign Language as an optional language. These programs  
9 shall be in compliance with the Department of Public Instruction  
10 Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Special  
11 Needs. American Sign Language shall be offered as a modern language  
12 with credit for individuals in the State's public schools and universities."

13 Sec. 3. G.S. 115C-81 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

14 "(a5) American Sign Language, as defined in G.S. 143B-216.30, shall be offered in  
15 the public schools as a modern language with credit for individuals attending public  
16 schools and shall be conducted under guidelines to be developed by the State Board of  
17 Education with the cooperation of the Department of Human Resources, Division of  
18 Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing."

19 Sec. 4. Chapter 116 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new  
20 Article to read:

21 **"ARTICLE 32.**

22 **"AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE.**

23 **"§ 116-255. American Sign Language.**

24 American Sign Language, as defined in G.S. 143B-216.30, shall be offered by the  
25 constituent institutions as a modern language with credit for individuals attending  
26 constituent institutions and shall be conducted under guidelines to be developed by the  
27 Board with the cooperation of the Department of Human Resources, Division of Services  
28 for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing."

29 Sec. 5. This act is effective upon ratification.