

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1995

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HOUSE BILL 457
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/4/95

Short Title: Recognize American Sign Language.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

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 may 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, may be offered in
15 the public schools as a modern language with credit for individuals attending public
16 schools and, if offered, shall be conducted under guidelines to be developed by the State
17 Board of Education with the cooperation of the Department of Human Resources,
18 Division of 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, may be offered by the
25 constituent institutions as a modern language with credit for individuals attending
26 constituent institutions and, if offered, shall be conducted under guidelines to be
27 developed by the Board with the cooperation of the Department of Human Resources,
28 Division of Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing."

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