

JAN 27 2016

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that American sign
2 language is a vital part of the linguistic heritage of the
3 State, which benefits and enriches hearing impaired and non-
4 hearing impaired individuals. American sign language
5 interpreters are routinely provided at private and state
6 functions and events. Introduction to American sign language at
7 an early age helps hearing impaired individuals become confident
8 in their identity, and sets the stage for their personal
9 success.

10 The legislature further finds that, although American sign
11 language is the fourth most popular language at colleges and
12 universities in the United States, it is not currently
13 recognized as a foreign language in Hawaii. This lack of
14 recognition makes it difficult for Hawaii public schools to meet
15 the needs of hearing impaired students, and to help students who
16 are interested in studying American sign language in college
17 prepare for their studies. Forty-two states currently recognize



S.B. NO. 2981

1 American sign language as a foreign language, and have
2 incorporated it into public school curricula.

3 The purpose of this Act is to recognize American sign
4 language as a foreign language, and to allow students who pass
5 courses in American sign language to receive credit for those
6 courses toward satisfaction of foreign language requirements.

7 SECTION 2. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 amended by adding a new section to part II to be appropriately
9 designated and to read as follows:

10 "§302A- American sign language. For purposes of this
11 chapter, American sign language shall be recognized as a foreign
12 language, and any public school may offer a course in American
13 sign language. A student who successfully completes a course in
14 American sign language shall be entitled to receive credit for
15 that course toward satisfaction of a foreign language
16 requirement of the public school where the course is offered."

17 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

18 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

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S.B. NO. 2981

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S.B. NO. 2981

Report Title:

American Sign Language; Official Foreign Language; Public Schools

Description:

Recognizes American sign language as a foreign language, and allows public school students who pass courses in American sign language to receive credit for the courses toward foreign language requirements.

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