

SB 685 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services

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Meeting Dates: 4/26

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Modifies definition of “communication facilitator” to restrict access to assistive services only to individuals who are deaf-blind, deaf with a physical disability that limits their expressive communication, and hard of hearing with such a physical disability, for purposes of Telecommunications Devices Access Program.

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: No fiscal impact

SENATE VOTE: Ayes, 23; Nays, 5; Excused, 2

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Adds persons who are deaf as separate category of individuals served by communication facilitator.

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

BACKGROUND:

In 1987, the legislature established the Telecommunications Devices Access Program through the Public Utility Commission, which provides devices and services to individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, and speech impaired, to enable them to communicate by telephone. The program distributes assistive communication devices that connect to telephones, such as amplified phones, captioned phones, electrolarynxes, speech generating devices, and others. House Bill 3205 (2019) established a “communication facilitator” service through the program, which provides additional personal support services that are necessary for effective communication over a telephone. Communication facilitators are available for persons who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing and have a physical disability that limits their expressive communication.

Senate Bill 685 modifies the definition of "communication facilitator" restrict access to assistive services only to individuals who are deaf-blind, deaf with a physical disability that limits their expressive communication, and hard of hearing with such a physical disability, for purposes of Telecommunications Devices Access Program.