

Comment Report

HSB 126

A bill for an act relating to the organization, structure, and functions of state government, providing for salaries of appointed state officers, providing for penalties, making appropriations, providing Code editor directives and transition provisions, and including applicability and effective date provisions.(See HF 662.)

Subcommittee Members: Bloomingdale-CH, Baeth, Johnson, Lundgren, Nielsen, Young, Zabner

Date: 02/22/2023

Time: 12:00 PM

Location: RM 103, Sup. Ct. Chamber

Name: Michael Plummer

Comment: HSB126 moves the State Historical Society of Iowa, an outwardfacing, publicfocused division under the authority of DAS, whose own mission statement describes it as an inwardfacing, government departmentfocused organization. DAS has limited experience with public engagement and public programming, while that is a large part of the State Historical Societys mission. How can DAS provide effective management? If the purpose of this bill is to increase efficiency, placing the State Historical Society under DAS would seem to run counter to that goal.

Name: Katherine Ring

Comment: My name is Dr. Katy Ring am commenting to express concern about this bill and the plan to moving the special schools from under the Board of Regents to being placed under the Department of Education. Iowas special schools include Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD) and Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually paired (IESBVI). IESBVI is currently known as Iowa Braille and Sight Saving school in Iowa code. I do not represent ISD or IESBVI. I am a statewide consult for students who are deafblind and a future IESBVI administrator. I do not represent IESBVI as I write this comment. I am an Iowa voter who is concerned how this change could impact services to children who are blind and visually impaired in our state. Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment (TVI) are specialized educators who work with these students. They travel to the students school or home and teach them important. They are highly trained with a specialized skill set. In other states these educators are typically hired by individual school districts or local area education agencies. They are often alone without the support they need. In other states they arent provided specialized training in working with students who are blind, and they are usually supervised by individuals with no training in visual impairments. Iowa is one of the only states that has a statewide system of support. In Iowa, IESBVI hires all these educators. They are supervised by educational leaders who are knowledgeable of best practices. They are provided training that is relevant to their work. They have access to consultants who help with assistive technology, completing math in Braille, literacy strategies, and transition after high school. The country is currently facing a teacher shortage in all areas, but especially in specialized areas such as this. Other states currently have several openings for vision teachers. IESBVI has been able to develop a system of teacher training and mentoring using a grow your own program. This has allowed our state to not feel the same shortage impact in this specialized area. IESBVIs ability to support teachers this way keeps students receiving the specialized support they need. It is crucial the committee consider the impact this move could have on IESBVIs ability to continue this approach. Iowa has not always had the statewide system of support. Individual vision teachers used to be employed by the individual area education agencies (AEA). The result was inconsistent services, missing services, and gaps in early identification of children who were visually impaired. The statewide system that is in place now is made possible

through contracts with the local area education agencies (AEAs). There is concern that the move to the Department of Education could jeopardize the AEA contracts. The Committee must ensure the statewide system of support is protected. I will not pretend to understand all the intricacies of Iowa code and the funding for the special schools. Moving ISD and IESBVI under the Department of Education may be of great benefit to all agencies. I only wish to seek reassurance that the statewide system of support will be protected. Educating students with vision loss requires educators that are highly trained. Those educators should be supervised, supported, and trained by individuals who are also highly trained in working with students with visual impairments. As an Iowa voter, I would appreciate your attention to this.

Name: Patricia Otten

Comment: My name is Patricia Otten and I am an Iowa citizen who is concerned about the impact this bill could have on services to students or who are blind in Iowa. I asked the committee to ensure that the state wide systems of support through IESBVI (called IBSS in this bill) will stay in place under this bill. I asked the committee to make sure that if the transition from the board of regents to the Iowa Department of education must take place that the committee ensures, that the policies and procedures in place at IESBVI stay. IESBVI's approach to service has led to improved outcomes for students and approach to training and mentoring staff, including their grow your own program has allowed Iowa to continue to be one of the only states not facing a crisis shortage of highly trained vision teachers.

Name: Tasha Welsh

Comment: To Representatives of Iowa, In the past the Department for the Blind has been overseen by a commission of independent citizens who are blind or have the priorities of the blind in mind when leading the organization. It has been proposed by Senate Bill 1123 division 13 and HSB 126 division 13 to remove the powers of the commission to appoint the officers of the Department for the Blind and put this in the hands of the governor. The commission has been made up of the blind residents of this state and this will effectively remove the power of the blind residents of this state to make sure they have effective and efficient education to make them better members of the state and their communities. I have a progressive eye condition that is causing me to lose my vision. In the past two years I have started to use the services of the Department for the Blind and the services provided have made me into a more independent and confident person because of the training I have received from the Department for the Blind. The awareness, knowledge, and experience of training under successful blind staff gave me the skills and ability to advocate for myself and other blind individuals. I fear that bringing the Iowa Department for the Blind under the governor's direct control will cause undue hardship to an already disadvantaged part of the population. Please strike the changes to be made by Senate bill 1123 and HSB 126 concerning the Department for the Blinds control being removed from the citizens it is there to assist and putting the powers of control under the governor and any current or future political dynamics that may happen to them. The Department for the Blind would be best served by not proceeding with any changes and assigning commission members that will assign the director of the Commission for the Blind and determine the most needed services for the blind population of Iowa. I'd be happy to speak with anyone further if anyone has any questions of comments. Sincerely, Tasha Welsh