

STATE OF NEW YORK

8025

IN SENATE

March 10, 2020

Introduced by Sen. SKOUFIS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Finance

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to establishing the office of the deaf and hard of hearing; and to repeal section 559 of the executive law relating to the New York state interagency coordinating council for services to persons who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The executive law is amended by adding a new article 29 to
2 read as follows:

ARTICLE 29

OFFICE OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

Section 827. Definitions.

6 828. Office of the deaf and hard of hearing.

7 829. Executive director.

8 830. Powers and duties of the office.

9 831. Deaf and hard of hearing advisory council.

10 § 827. Definitions. When used in this article, the following words and
11 terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section: "deaf
12 and hard of hearing" shall mean a person who has partial or complete
13 loss of hearing including individuals who are deaf-blind.

14 § 828. Office of the deaf and hard of hearing. There is hereby estab-
15 lished within the executive department the "office of the deaf and hard
16 of hearing".

17 § 829. Executive director. The governor shall appoint an executive
18 director of the office who shall serve at the pleasure of the governor.
19 The executive director shall receive an annual salary fixed by the
20 governor within the amounts appropriated specifically therefor and shall
21 be entitled to reimbursement for actual expenses necessarily incurred in
22 the discharge of their official duties.

23 § 830. Powers and duties of the office. 1. The office shall advise the
24 governor and the legislature on how the state can effectively meet the
25 needs of the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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2. The duties and responsibilities of the office are to:

(a) create a statewide plan to deliver coordinated services and programs to persons who are deaf and hard of hearing in a manner that best serves their needs including but not limited to educational, medical, housing, and employment services;

(b) develop a process to collect and maintain data on the number of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in New York state;

(c) regularly maintain a website that serves as a clearinghouse of information, resources and services for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing;

(d) create a referral system that receives complaints in matters affecting the deaf and hard of hearing community and refers such complaints to the appropriate agencies or organizations if necessary or appropriate;

(e) coordinate with state and local agencies to improve access to public safety and emergency services;

(f) develop strategies to increase employment opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing individuals;

(g) develop and recommend policies to the governor and legislature as deemed necessary to assist the deaf and hard of hearing communities;

(h) develop a model policy on interpreter services including methods to increase access to such services and licensing of qualified interpreters;

(i) provide technical assistance to local governments, agencies or other non-governmental entities on developing policies, providing services and increasing accessibility for the deaf and hard of hearing communities;

(j) improve and expand access to assistive technology including but not limited to, relay services, closed captioning, open captioning, hearing loops, telecommunication devices or other communication services; and

(k) coordinate with the department of state regarding access to hearing aids and other associated resources.

3. The office shall submit an annual report to the governor and legislature detailing the operation and actions of the office including but not limited to the development and implementation of the statewide plan, policy recommendations, and actions taken in conjunction with state or local agencies.

§ 831. Deaf and hard of hearing advisory council. 1. An advisory council is hereby established to make recommendations on deaf and hard of hearing related issues, assist in the development of policies, and facilitate coordination between federal, state and local governments on issues related to the deaf and hard of hearing community.

2. The advisory council shall be comprised of eleven voting members. All members must be New York residents.

(a) Four members of the council shall be appointed by the governor, two of whom shall be deaf or hard of hearing.

(b) Four members of the council shall be appointed in the following manner and must be deaf or hard of hearing: one member of the council shall be appointed by the temporary president of the senate, one member of the council shall be appointed by the speaker of the assembly, one member of the council shall be appointed by the minority leader of the senate and one member of the council shall be appointed by the minority leader of the assembly.

(c) One member of the council shall be the executive director of the office of the deaf and hard of hearing; one member of the council shall

1 be the president of the empire association of the deaf or their desig-
2 nee; and one member of the council shall be the president of the hearing
3 loss association of New York state or their designee.

4 3. The members of the advisory council shall serve terms of three
5 years. Of the four persons appointed pursuant to paragraph (a) of subdi-
6 vision two of this section, two shall serve for a term of two years and
7 two shall serve for a term of one year, as determined by the governor.
8 Of the four persons appointed pursuant to paragraph (b) of subdivision
9 two of this section, the appointments by the temporary president of the
10 senate and the speaker of the assembly shall serve for a term of two
11 years, and the appointments by the minority leader of the senate and the
12 minority leader of the assembly shall serve for a term of one year.
13 Subsequent appointments upon the expiration of term shall be for a term
14 of three years and shall be filled in the same manner as the original
15 appointment.

16 4. Members of the advisory council shall serve without compensation,
17 but shall be allowed their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the
18 performance of their duties.

19 5. The advisory council shall meet no less than two times per year.
20 The meetings shall be made accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing
21 community. A majority of the voting membership of the advisory council
22 shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of council business.
23 Action may be taken and motions and resolutions adopted by the advisory
24 council at any meeting thereof by the affirmative vote of six members of
25 the advisory council.

26 § 2. Section 559 of the executive law is REPEALED.

27 § 3. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after
28 it shall have become a law.