

SB 1023 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Human Services

Action Date: 04/17/17

Action: Do pass with amendments. Refer to Ways and Means by prior reference. (Printed A-Eng).

Vote: 5-0-0-0

Yeas: 5 - Dembrow, Gelser, Knopp, Monnes Anderson, Olsen

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: Revenue impact issued

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WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Fund, separate from General Fund, and makes continuous appropriation to Department of Human Services to administer programs for deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing individuals. Requires Public Utility Commission (PUC) to transfer up to \$200,000 annually from Residential Service Protection Fund to Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Fund. Takes effect 91st day after adjournment *sine die*.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Budget concerns and possible amendments
- Expanding access to deaf and hard of hearing services; comparison to services in other states; access to telecommunications services in particular
- Merits of using Residential Service Protection Fund dollars
- Current purpose of Residential Service Protection Fund

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Requires PUC to transfer up to \$200,000 annually from Residential Service Protection Fund to Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Fund. Requires DHS and PUC to enter agreement regarding transfer of funds.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon law establishes the Oregon Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services Program in the Department of Human Services (DHS). The program is funded through General Fund appropriations to DHS. The Residential Service Protection Fund, established in 1987, is a separate fund in the state treasury that collects money from surcharges placed on telecommunication subscribers by the Public Utility Commission (PUC) to help maintain services for specific populations, including low income customers and customers who are deaf, among others.

Senate Bill 1023-A creates a separate Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Fund for DHS to administer programs for deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing people. The measure also directs the PUC to transfer up to \$200,000 annually from the Residential Service Protection Fund to the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Fund. The measure also requires DHS and PUC to enter into an agreement regarding the the amount of money transferred and how it will be spent, and to plan for biennial reductions of transferred amounts.