

HB 3205 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Business and Labor

Prepared By: Jan Nordlund, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/20

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires Public Utility Commission to expand Telecommunication Devices Access Program to include contracts with qualified third-party entities to provide communication facilitator services for persons who are deaf-blind. Defines "communication facilitator."

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Modifies definition of "communication facilitator." Removes requirement that PUC contract for provision of communication facilitator services and instead directs PUC to expand the telecommunication devices access program to include provision communication facilitator services to persons who are deaf-blind.

BACKGROUND:

In recognition of the large number of people in the state who are not able to utilize telecommunication equipment due to the inability to hear or speak well enough or due to other disabilities, the legislature established the Telecommunications Devices Access Program in 1987. The program, administered by the Public Utility Commission with the advice of an advisory committee, purchases and distributes assistive communication equipment to persons who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, or speech impaired to be used in conjunction with the program's telecommunications relay service. House Bill 3205 expands the program to include contracting for the services of a communication facilitator who provides in-person services to help a person who is deaf-blind communicate effectively on the telephone.