

Nevada School for the Deaf Legislative Initiative

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Nevada is one of only a handful of states that does not have either an independent or state-sponsored school for the Deaf. It is likely that a majority of states in the United States of America have statutorily mandated schools for the Deaf. We seek to bring Nevada up to the standard of Deaf education elsewhere in the country by advocating for a state-sponsored school for the Deaf.

Twice in recent years (2019 and 2025) bills have been introduced calling for a study on the feasibility of a publicly funded school for the Deaf. These efforts were not successful, in part because of a bias against costly initiatives, and perhaps in part due to an insufficient expression of public support for the idea.

In recent discussions with Senator Doñate, we were advised to consider requesting a bill to establish a school for the Deaf, rather than requesting a bill that merely asks for a study.

The education subcommittee of the Deaf Commission is conducting a survey of students, parents and school staff engaged in deaf and hard of hearing education programs throughout the state. We believe that through these and follow-up efforts we may be able to accomplish much of what an interim study might have accomplished. In particular, we aim to gather sufficient data to clearly demonstrate a need for a school for the Deaf and that a substantial constituency exists to support a school for the Deaf.

Statutes in other states articulate the authority that will govern the school and the scope and mission of the school. From these many examples, we will draft some proposed language for a bill as a starting point for discussion with potential bill sponsors.

The most substantial challenge in developing a draft will may be defining the structure of a proposed school that serves the largest cross section of stakeholders statewide, and bring the largest number of supporters to the Legislature should we succeed in getting a bill heard. The annual operating budget of the New Mexico School for the Deaf is \$25M. The initial cost of establishing a school will be greater. This is a substantial ask that will require substantial public support.