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A bill to be entitled
 An act relating to the Florida Commission on Deafness;
 creating the Florida Commission on Deafness; providing
 membership and organization of the commission; providing
 role, purpose, powers, duties, and responsibilities of the
 commission; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Florida Commission on Deafness.--

(1)(a) There is established the Florida Commission on Deafness. The commission is assigned to the Executive Office of the Governor for administrative and fiscal accountability purposes, but it shall otherwise function independently of the control, supervision, and direction of the Executive Office of the Governor.

(b) The commission shall consist of 9 members appointed by the Governor, five of whom shall be representatives of and recommended by statewide not-for-profit professional organizations that represent deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened individuals, three of whom shall be representatives of and recommended by statewide not-for-profit professional or service-provider organizations, and one of whom shall be a representative of the Department of Management Services. Each member shall serve a term of 4 years; however, for the purpose of providing staggered terms, of the initial appointments, four members shall be appointed to a 2-year term and five members shall be appointed to a 4-year term. Any vacancy on the commission shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment, and any member appointed to fill a vacancy



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31 occurring because of death, resignation, or ineligibility for
 32 membership shall serve only for the unexpired term of the
 33 member's predecessor.

34 (c) The commission shall elect one member to serve as
 35 chair of the commission for a term of 1 year. The commission
 36 shall meet at least once each quarter. All meetings are subject
 37 to the call of the chair. Eight members of the commission shall
 38 constitute a quorum.

39 (d) Members of the commission shall serve without
 40 compensation but may be reimbursed for per diem and travel
 41 expenses pursuant to s. 112.061, Florida Statutes.

42 (e) The commission shall employ and supervise an executive
 43 director. The executive director shall report directly to the
 44 commission. The executive director shall be responsible for
 45 employing and supervising all employees and staff members of the
 46 commission.

47 (2) The commission shall have a main office, which shall
 48 be centrally located in the state in an area where there are
 49 large, active deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened
 50 communities, and shall establish six regional offices throughout
 51 the state to provide services to deaf, hard-of-hearing, and
 52 late-deafened citizens and to assist local service providers in
 53 the delivery of such services.

54 (3)(a) It shall be the role of the commission to address
 55 the needs of deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened
 56 individuals by providing technical assistance, advocacy, and
 57 education. To that end, the commission shall:

- 58 1. Provide information and assistance to the Legislature.
- 59 2. Provide technical assistance to other state agencies.
- 60 3. Provide information and referral services.



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61 4. Promote public and individual advocacy for deaf, hard-
62 of-hearing, and late-deafened citizens.

63 5. Conduct public hearings as needed.

64 (b) It shall be a primary role of the commission to ensure
65 that educational, mental health, medical, legal, social, and
66 vocational services and activities are fully accessible by deaf,
67 hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened citizens. The commission
68 shall initiate recommendations to state agencies regarding
69 compliance with accessibility issues and standards as they
70 relate to services for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened
71 individuals and may file deficiency reports with agencies when
72 it has deemed that services are inaccessible to such
73 individuals. It shall be a duty of the commission to ensure
74 compliance by state agencies with equipment and communication
75 accessibility standards in the provision of services to deaf,
76 hard-of-hearing, and late-deafened individuals. The commission
77 shall also exercise oversight and enforcement responsibilities
78 with respect to licensure and accreditation of sign-language
79 interpreters, oral interpreters, and entities providing
80 services, both directly and indirectly, to individuals with
81 hearing loss.

82 (c) The commission shall have the authority to withdraw
83 any contract or agreement it has entered into or to revoke any
84 license issued under the authority of the commission if at any
85 time it determines that the service or services provided by the
86 person or entity with whom the commission has a contract or
87 agreement or to whom a license has been issued are inaccessible
88 to individuals with hearing loss. In instances in which the
89 commission determines that a service or services are
90 inaccessible to individuals with hearing loss and the



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91 jurisdiction to take remedial action lies with a state agency,
 92 the commission may offer technical assistance, information, and
 93 support to the state agency.

94 (d) The commission shall have oversight responsibility in
 95 areas related to accessibility to individuals with hearing loss,
 96 including, but not limited to, standards for and licensure of
 97 sign-language interpreters and providers of Computer-Aided Real-
 98 time Translation services (CART) and other service provider
 99 accreditation standards for which oversight is not provided by a
 100 state agency. In areas in which oversight responsibility resides
 101 with a state agency, the commission shall provide technical
 102 assistance and information exchange.

103 (e) The commission may:

104 1. Secure assistance from all state departments and
 105 agencies in order to avail itself of expertise at minimal cost.

106 2. Procure information and assistance from the state or
 107 any political subdivision, municipal corporation, public
 108 officer, or governmental department or agency thereof.

109 3. Apply for and accept funds, grants, gifts, and services
 110 from local or state government or the Federal Government, or
 111 from any of their agencies, or any other public or private
 112 source and may use funds derived from these sources to defray
 113 administrative costs, implement programs as may be necessary to
 114 carry out the commission's charge, and assist agencies,
 115 institutions, and individuals in the implementation of programs
 116 designed to ensure full accessibility to services by individuals
 117 with hearing loss.

118 4. Contract for necessary goods and services.

119 (f) The commission shall provide funding for direct
 120 services through the request-for-proposal process, which shall



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121 include, but not be limited to, regional core services, local
122 direct services such as one-stop centers that provide services
123 to facilitate communication accessibility among individuals with
124 hearing loss, licensure of sign-language interpreters in the
125 state, accreditation of service providers for individuals with
126 hearing loss, and assistance to state agencies in the
127 enforcement of existing laws to ensure that public-sector and
128 private-sector services are accessible to individuals with
129 hearing loss.

130 (4) All executive branch state agencies are instructed,
131 and all other state agencies are requested, to aid and assist
132 the commission in the accomplishment of its purposes.

133 Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.