

HB 241 -- CDL ACCOMMODATIONS

SPONSOR: Neely

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Transportation by a vote of 13 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 7 to 2.

This bill requires any department or entity providing CDL training to persons preparing to apply for CDL licenses under the provisions of Sections 302.700 to 302.780, RSMo, to provide reasonable accommodations for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. Specific requirements shall be set by rules promulgated by the Director of the Department of Revenue.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill will provide commercial drivers license (CDL) testing accommodations for the hearing impaired. It is difficult to find qualified CDL drivers and someone with a hearing impairment should not be disqualified from receiving a CDL license. Additionally, people who have hearing impairment are currently driving. There are misconceptions that someone cannot drive because they cannot hear. The CDL exam is only offered in spoken English. Many hearing impaired drivers will not be able to complete the exam unless there are accommodations for the test. The hearing impaired will be able to get a designation on their license because of their impairment. Supporters say that hearing impairment drivers may be safer because they are not distracted by sound. The trucking industry is facing a shortage nationwide and especially in Missouri. The bill will give the state more flexibility for the hard of hearing and allow a hearing impaired person to have an opportunity to work in the transportation industry. Supporters also say that Governor Parson supports the bill and looks to develop accommodations for the hearing impaired.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Neely and Dr. Opeoluwa Sotonwa, Missouri Commission For The Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that they are concerned that this may not be in compliance with federal regulation and do not want to jeopardize federal funding. The Federal Department of Transportation prohibits using interpreters for skills test.

Testifying on the bill was Mark Seittmann, Missouri Department Of Revenue.

