



SOUTH CAROLINA REVENUE AND FISCAL AFFAIRS OFFICE

STATEMENT OF ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT

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This fiscal impact statement is produced in compliance with the South Carolina Code of Laws and House and Senate rules. The focus of the analysis is on governmental expenditure and revenue impacts and may not provide a comprehensive summary of the legislation.

Bill Number: H. 4610 Introduced on January 13, 2026
Subject: American Sign Language Symbol Act
Requestor: House Education and Public Works
RFA Analyst(s): Daigle and Bryant
Impact Date: March 23, 2026 - Updated for Additional Agency Response

Fiscal Impact Summary

This bill recognizes the American Sign Language (ASL) “I Love You” (ILY) hand gesture as the official ASL symbol of South Carolina, which must be recognized in all official contexts related to South Carolina state emblems. This bill creates several requirements for state agencies to recognize, promote, and provide education on ASL and the ILY gesture, including requirements for the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), the Arts Commissions, the Historic Preservation Office within the Department of Archives and History (Archives and History), the Governor’s Office and relevant agencies, the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (PRT).

The Arts Commission indicates that these responsibilities can be managed with existing staff and resources. Archives and History, DOT, and the Office of the Governor indicate that this bill will increase expenses by an undetermined amount; however, any increase in expenses and workload can be managed with existing resources and appropriations. PRT indicates that since materials for welcome centers are updated routinely, this bill will have a minimal impact on the department, which can be handled with existing staff and appropriations.

This bill will increase expenses for SCDE by an amount up to \$700,000 in FY 2026-27, including \$500,000 of recurring and \$200,000 of non-recurring expenses to incorporate the ILY gesture into the state’s education curriculum. Of the recurring expenses, \$350,000 is for materials and \$150,000 is to contract or hire additional staff to facilitate materials creation, distribution, and professional development to train educators in the content. The remaining \$200,000 is for one-time expenses for materials development and distribution. SCDE reports that it will request a General Fund appropriation increase to pay for the expenses.

This bill will have no expenditure impact on the Governor’s School for Agriculture at John de la Howe, the Governor’s School for Arts and Humanities, the Governor’s School for Science and Mathematics, School for the Deaf and the Blind, and the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School. The agencies indicate that they can manage the provisions of the bill with existing appropriations.

Furthermore, this bill may create additional requirements for state agencies to ensure that offices have ASL-accessible resources and promote the use of the ILY gesture as a symbol of inclusivity. Based on the aforementioned responses, we assume that any relevant state agencies would use existing resources to comply with the requirements of this bill.

SCDE surveyed the seventy-two regular school districts and three charter school districts and received responses from twelve districts. Ten districts indicate that this bill will have no expenditure impact. One district anticipates that any costs associated with implementing the provisions of the bill can be managed with existing appropriations. The remaining district indicates that this bill may increase expenses but reports that the cost is currently undetermined and will depend upon the cost of the instructional materials developed by SCDE.

This fiscal impact statement has been updated to include a response from the School for the Deaf and the Blind and the Arts Commission.

Explanation of Fiscal Impact

Updated for Additional Agency Response on March 23, 2026

Introduced on January 13, 2026

State Expenditure

This bill recognizes the ASL ILY hand gesture as the official ASL symbol of South Carolina, which must be recognized in all official contexts related to South Carolina state emblems.

This bill requires SCDE to incorporate the ILY gesture into the state's educational curriculum, develop instructional materials to teach the significance of ASL and the ILY gesture in public schools and universities, and work with state agencies and disability advocates to promote ASL awareness through public events, historical exhibits, and community programs.

This bill also requires the Arts Commissions and the Historic Preservation Office to recognize existing sculptures of the ILY hand gesture, such as those created by Bob Doster, as a part of the state's public art and cultural heritage. The Arts Commission and Historic Preservation Office must also encourage new public art installations incorporating the ILY gesture.

In addition, this bill requires the Governor's Office and relevant agencies to establish an annual event celebrating ASL and the ILY gesture, ensure state agencies and offices have ALS-accessible resources, promote the gesture as a symbol of inclusivity, and collaborate with South Carolina-based businesses, tourism boards, and historical organizations to integrate the ILY gesture into public signage, promotional materials, and state heritage programs.

Furthermore, this bill requires that DOT must consider adding signage at major landmarks, welcome centers, and highways to recognize the ILY gesture as a state symbol, and work with SCDE and advocacy groups to create awareness campaigns highlighting the gesture's meaning and significance.

Finally, this bill states that the General Assembly encourages local governments, businesses, and educational institutions to recognize and promote the ILY gesture, partnerships with advocacy organizations to expand awareness and support for the gesture, and to further initiatives that advance accessibility and communication equity in the state.

Arts Commission. This bill creates new responsibilities for the Arts Commission to recognize existing sculptures of the ILY hand gesture as a part of South Carolina's public art and cultural heritage and to encourage new public art installations. The Arts Commission indicates that these responsibilities can be managed with existing staff and resources. The commission anticipates that the Communications Director will acknowledge the existing ILY statues on the agency website, and the Accessibility Director will create a public art accessibility toolkit to adhere to the requirements of this bill. However, if the recognition and encouragement requirements are interpreted to be more expansive than currently anticipated, this may impact these estimates.

Department of Archives and History. This bill creates new responsibilities for the Department of Archives and History to recognize existing sculptures of the ILY hand gesture as a part of South Carolina's public art and cultural heritage, which will have an undetermined impact on the department. Archives and History anticipates that to adhere to the new responsibilities of this bill, staff will survey and record each existing and any new statues and incorporate the images and survey records into the records group for the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, where they would be made available to the public. Archives and History indicates that due to the age of existing ILY sculptures, the sculptures would not be eligible for further historical recognition through either the National Register of Historic Places or a State Historical Marker until 2058, or as late as 2068. Any increase in expenses due to this process will be dependent on staff travel schedules and available archival staffing and supplies and, therefore, is unknown. Archives and History anticipates that any increase in expenses due to this bill can be managed with existing resources. However, if the recognition requirements are interpreted to be more expansive than currently anticipated, this may impact these estimates.

Department of Education. This bill creates new responsibilities for SCDE to incorporate the ILY gesture into the state's educational curriculum. This bill will increase expenses for SCDE by an amount up to \$700,000 in FY 2026-27, including \$500,000 of recurring and \$200,000 of non-recurring expenses. Of the recurring expenses, \$350,000 will be required for materials and \$150,000 will be required to contract or hire additional staff to facilitate materials creation, distribution, and professional development to train educators in the content. This bill will also increase non-recurring expenses by \$200,000 for materials development and distribution. SCDE reports that it will request a General Fund appropriation increase to pay for the expenses.

State Agency Schools. This bill will have no expenditure impact on the Governor's School for Agriculture at John de la Howe, the Governor's School for Arts and Humanities, the Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, the School for the Deaf and the Blind, and the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School. The agencies indicate that they can manage the provisions of the bill with existing appropriations.

Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. This bill states that adding educational signage to recognize the ILY gestures' meaning and significance at welcome centers, which are overseen by PRT, must be considered. PRT indicates that this bill will have a minimal impact on the department, which can be handled with existing staff and appropriations, since materials for welcome centers are updated routinely.

Department of Transportation. This bill requires DOT to consider the ILY gesture in signage and to work with SCDE to create awareness campaigns related to the gesture, which will have an undetermined expenditure impact on the department. DOT indicates that since the signage requirements in this bill do not contain defined parameters, the level of effort, materials, and expenses that may be incurred by the department are unknown. Furthermore, expenses will depend on the location, standards, design, fabrication, installation, and ongoing maintenance of signage. Therefore, the expenditure impact on DOT due to this bill is undetermined. However, DOT indicates that any increase in expenses due to this bill can be handled with existing resources and appropriations.

Office of the Governor. The Office of the Governor anticipates that this bill will have no fiscal impact on the office to establish an event celebrating the ILY gesture, ensure ASL-accessible resources are available at state agencies and offices, and to perform specified collaboration efforts pursuant to the bill. The Office of the Governor indicates that this bill assigns responsibilities to the office, relevant agencies, and state agencies and offices, which are not defined within the bill, and therefore, the office anticipates collaborating with cabinet agencies whose statutory mission aligns with the intent of this bill in order to meet the requirements. Thus, the Office of the Governor indicates that the requirements of this bill can be managed with existing staff and resources.

Furthermore, this bill may create additional requirements for state agencies to ensure that offices have ASL-accessible resources and promote the use of the ILY gesture as a symbol of inclusivity. Based on the aforementioned responses, we assume that any relevant state agencies would comply with the requirements of this bill with existing resources.

This section has been updated to include a response from the Arts Commission and the School for the Deaf and the Blind.

State Revenue

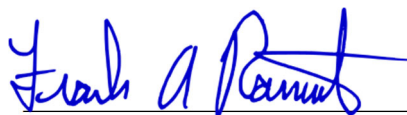
N/A

Local Expenditure

This bill requires local school districts to comply with the incorporation of the ILY gesture into the educational curriculum created by SCDE. SCDE surveyed the seventy-two regular school districts and three charter school districts and received responses from twelve districts. Ten districts indicate that this bill will have no expenditure impact. One district anticipates that any costs associated with implementing the provisions of the bill can be managed with existing appropriations. The remaining district indicates that this bill may increase expenses but reports that the cost is currently undetermined and will depend upon the cost of the instructional materials developed by SCDE.

Local Revenue

N/A



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