
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONVENE A STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE IN THE STATE THROUGH THE PROVISION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES.

1 WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of ensuring accessible,
2 affordable, and equitable health care for all individuals is in
3 the public interest; and

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5 WHEREAS, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandates
6 recipients of federal financial assistance to take reasonable
7 steps to provide meaningful access to programs, services, and
8 activities for limited English proficient (LEP) persons; and

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10 WHEREAS, the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 American Community
11 Survey reveals that 21.5 percent of people in the United States
12 communicate in a language other than English at home, with 8.2
13 percent of them having a limited ability to speak English very
14 well, meeting the definition of limited English proficiency; and

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16 WHEREAS, in Hawaii, 25.9 percent of persons aged five years
17 and older speak a language other than English at home; and

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19 WHEREAS, the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic underscored
20 the critical necessity of services in Asian American, Native
21 Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander languages, with communities
22 having high numbers of LEP residents experiencing higher rates
23 of incidence and mortality; and

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25 WHEREAS, the August 2023 Maui wildfires increased the need
26 for accessible health care services, particularly for LEP
27 individuals; and

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29 WHEREAS, the language barriers faced by LEP individuals
30 contribute to decreased quality of care, poor clinical outcomes,



1 and more extended hospital stays, emphasizing the need for
2 language assistance services; and

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4 WHEREAS, LEP individuals and those who are deaf, hard of
5 hearing, blind, or have low vision, may require assistance such
6 as interpreters, translated materials, or alternative formats
7 for effective communication during health care interactions; and

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9 WHEREAS, communication and language barriers are linked to
10 disparities in patient-provider interactions, particularly
11 affecting racial and ethnic minorities and the twenty-four
12 million adults with limited English proficiency residing in the
13 United States; and

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15 WHEREAS, LEP individuals have shared experiences of having
16 to retain their own interpreters in health care settings even
17 after requesting their health care providers to arrange for
18 professional interpreters; and

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20 WHEREAS, studies indicate that access to communication and
21 language assistance is integral to the delivery of high-quality
22 health care for all populations; and

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24 WHEREAS, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program
25 providers, Medicare Part A providers, and organizations offering
26 Medicare Advantage Plans and Prescription Drug Plans may need to
27 provide language assistance services to comply with federal
28 requirements; and

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30 WHEREAS, while major hospitals across the State have made
31 strides in addressing language barriers, much remains to be done
32 to ensure comprehensive language access in health care settings
33 to guarantee equitable and effective communication for all
34 individuals, particularly those with limited English
35 proficiency; and

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37 WHEREAS, effective communication is crucial in health care
38 and human services to prevent misdiagnosis, delayed medical
39 treatment, and barriers to necessary services and programs; now,
40 therefore,

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42 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
43 Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular
44 Session of 2024, the Senate concurring, that the Department of



1 Health is requested to convene a Stakeholder Working Group to
2 make recommendations to enhance meaningful access to health care
3 in the State through the provision of language assistance
4 services; and
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6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is
7 requested to invite stakeholders, including health care
8 providers, insurers, representatives of community-based
9 organizations, language service providers, and the Healthcare
10 Association of Hawaii, to participate in the Stakeholder Working
11 Group; and
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13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Stakeholder Working Group
14 is requested to:
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16 (1) Study and assess language access in health care
17 settings across the State and on each island in the
18 State, including but not limited to:
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20 (A) Experiences of LEP populations using language
21 assistance services;
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23 (B) Existing language assistance services and
24 workforce;
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26 (C) Disparities faced by LEP individuals in access to
27 health care;
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29 (D) Practice of using family members and friends as
30 interpreters in health care settings;
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32 (E) Availability of interpreters; and
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34 (F) Requirements for providing interpretation
35 services in medical and health care settings; and
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37 (2) Make recommendations to enhance meaningful access to
38 health care in the State for individuals requiring
39 language assistance services; and
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41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is
42 requested to submit a report of the Stakeholder Working Group's
43 study, findings, and recommendations, including any proposed



1 legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior
2 to the convening of the Regular Session of 2025; and

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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
5 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health.

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