

HB-1945-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2022 10:15:51 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/17/2022 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
RONALD FLORMATA	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Good afternoon Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members.

My name is RONALD FLORMATA and I fully support HB1945 H.D.1.

My family and I moved to Oahu several years ago and right at the start I signed up as a client of Ho'Opono Services for the Blind. This branch of the Hawaii State was instrumental in turning my otherwise not-so-bright future as a blind individual. They provided me with the necessary skills that a blind person needs to pursue a productive life. Sure, you can depend on your family members to assist you every step of the way, but not 24/7. It is imperative that you learn to be independent and armed with the requisite skills as a blind person. Ho'Opono gave me the courage and confidence to move around using my cane, travel on my own, and run a business as a blind vendor to make a living. I honestly believe that Ho'Opono was a life changer for me. I am lucky to be living in Oahu.

What about those blind individuals in other islands? Will they have a better future? Can they go out of their house to go to work, attend church services, go to malls, just like an ordinary person? Why? Or should I say why not.

Let us give our blind brothers and sisters on the other Islands the chance to succeed in life - just like me and other blind persons fortunate to live in Oahu.

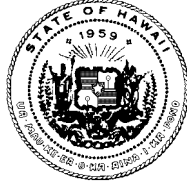
Let's provide them with Ho'Opono services as well. It's only fair.

The House has already spoken with the passage of HB1945 H.D.1. now, it is in your hands to help pass this bill in the Hawaii Senate. The esteemed members of this Committee can be part of the catalyst to change the lives of blind persons living on the other Islands of Hawaii.

Much Mahalo!

Ronald Flormata

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 16, 2022

TO: The Honorable Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1945 HD1 – RELATING TO THE NEIGHBOR ISLANDS BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.**

HEARING: Thursday, March 17, 2022, 3:00 p.m..
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent and offers comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to require the department of human services to establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program that provides training and other services to blind or visually impaired individuals residing on the neighbor islands. Requires a report to the legislature. Appropriates funds. Repeals 06/30/2025. Effective 7/1/2060. (HD1) The HD1 amended the measure by,

- (1) Deleting the preamble, other than for a narrowed purpose statement;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 2060, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The DHS appreciates the measure's intent as it may serve to supplement services for neighbor island residents, particularly with transportation. However, DHS respectfully notes that services described in the measure are currently available to eligible participants of our Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Services for the Blind Branch, Ho`opono. A number

of the services are also provided by non-profit statewide centers for independent living. Additionally, assistive technology devices and training are available via the State Grant for Assistive Technology, offered through the Assistive Technology Resource Center.

DVR's Ho`opono program provides outreach and adjustment to blindness services that include: Structured Discovery™ training; peer-to-peer mentoring; individual and group counseling for the adjustment to blindness; information and referral to community resources, including consumer organizations; training in orientation and mobility, daily living, self-care, and home management skills; benefits counseling; financial assistance with vocational training and higher education; competitive, integrated employment opportunities; low vision services and more to eligible individuals in their homes and communities via the Vocational Rehabilitation program, the New Visions program, and the Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind Program statewide.

DVR's Ho`opono New Visions program is the only training center to hold Structured Discovery™ certification in the State of Hawaii. DVR received the certification of the National Blindness Professional Certification Board in 2008.

The proposed legislation requires that the pilot program's volunteer services shall be "... recruited, assigned, and supervised by the department of human services or an entity contracted by the department to organize and implement the pilot program." It further requires that DHS shall "... work with neighbor island transportation service providers and other individuals to develop a special needs transportation assistance service network to serve program participants."

The measure would additionally require DHS to "establish procedures and requirements for accepting program participants;" and further, that DHS shall "enter into a contract with a non-profit organization to recruit, train, and supervise volunteer service corps members and to oversee the pilot program, provided that existing department personnel may be assigned to fulfill administrative and fiscal responsibilities of the support program."

If the measure passes, DHS will need new positions and a general fund appropriation to perform these additional duties and maintain current responsibilities. Additionally, the federal funding requirements of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Services for

Older Blind grants would prevent DHS staff from working on services provided to individuals who are not eligible for our programs. Consequently, the proposed measure requires new 100% state general funded positions.

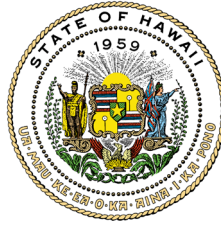
The proposed legislation also requires that: “[t]he department of human services shall identify and secure other sources of funding, including federal funding, to provide for matching funds for the pilot program...” As mentioned above, DHS will attempt to secure such funding; however, this will likely be difficult due to existing federal funding already allocated for these services as noted above to serve DVR’s clients statewide.

DHS appreciates that any funds appropriated pursuant to this proposed legislation shall be in addition to and shall not reduce or supplant any portion of the base budget priorities identified in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII

ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH



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HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2831

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1945 HD1
Relating to The Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program**

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATOR LES IHARA, JR., VICE CHAIR

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao
Director, Executive Office on Aging
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing Date: March 17, 2022
3:00 PM

Room Number: 225
Via Videoconference

1 **EOA's Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department
2 of Health, supports the intent of HB1945 HD1, Relating to The Neighbor Islands Blind and
3 Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program.

4 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure appropriates an unspecified amount of funds to the
5 department of human services for fiscal year 2022-2023 to establish and operate the neighbor
6 island blind and visually impaired service pilot program.

7 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this bill is to establish a neighbor island blind and
8 visually impaired service pilot program that provides training and other services to our hidden
9 blind or visually impaired individuals living on the neighbor islands. It also requires the
10 Department of Human Services to report to the 2025 Legislative session.

11 Mr. Philip Ana is EOA's Long-Term Care Disabilities Specialist. His job is to take calls from the
12 community statewide, answer questions, provide resources, and offer technical assistance as

1 needed. When he makes a connection, he can hear the joy of the caller on the other side of the
2 line. The person is relieved and grateful that help is on the way.

3 Mr. Ana strongly believes this is the purpose of this bill. Testimonies for HB1945 spoke loud
4 and clear that there is a strong desire to support other blind individuals, like Mr. Ana, who do not
5 have the same opportunities as those living on Oahu.

6 Is there hidden blindness in our community? Mr. Ana says yes there is, especially on the
7 neighbor islands, where services are limited.

8 **Recommendation:** EOA strongly supports the intent of this measure provided that its enactment
9 does not reduce or replace priorities with the Administration's budget request.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129

March 17, 2022

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

House Bill 1945, House Draft 1 – Relating to the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 1945, House Draft 1 Relating to the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program. This bill would require the Department of Human Services to establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide training and other services to blind residents residing on the neighbor islands.

Equivalent programs and services are not available on the neighbor islands. The pilot program would provide statistics needed to support the need for training and services to individuals who are blind and visually impaired who live on the neighbor islands. Providing training, services and support to individuals who are blind and visually impaired on their respective island will improve their quality of life and independence.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**

P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1945, H.D. 1

**March 17, 2022
3:00 p.m.
Room 225 and Videoconference**

**RELATING TO THE NEIGHBOR ISLANDS BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM**

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 1945, H.D. 1: 1) establishes the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program (NIBVISPP) within the Department of Human Services (DHS); 2) sets program service requirements for NIBVISPP regarding the types of services provided and the provision of services by volunteers; 3) requires DHS to contract with a nonprofit organization to recruit and manage NIBVISPP's volunteers and to oversee the provision of services; 4) sets reporting requirements for DHS; 5) provides definitions for clarity; and 6) appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds, with non-supplanting and matching funds requirements, to DHS in FY 23 to fund NIBVISPP.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

HB-1945-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2022 4:58:28 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/17/2022 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support.



HAWAII ASSOCIATION of the Blind

91-1727 Bond St. Ewa Beach, HI 96706

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services

Senator Les Ihara, Vice Chair

RE HB 1945, HD 1

Hearing Date: March 17, 2022

Rom Number: Conference Room 225

3:00 p.m.

Testimony of the Hawaii Association of the Blind (HAB)

HAB supports HB 1945, HD 1. HAB is a non-profit organization concerned with the welfare of blind people throughout the State of Hawaii and is affiliated with the American Congress of the Blind.

This pilot project, as proposed, would provide a full array of services for blind people who live on the neighbor islands. The comprehensive services indicated in this Bill will lead to a substantially improved quality of life and increase opportunities for independent living on the neighbor islands. Many,, if not most, of our HAB members have been well served by Ho'opono Services for the Blind Division.

HAB expects that blind persons who are not eligible for Ho'opono's services will, also, benefit from this pilot program.

HAB thanks you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1945 appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 1945 HD 1.

Donald Thompson, Chair. Advocacy Committee. HAB

Tel. (808) 671-1160



HAWAII ASSOCIATION of the Blind

91-1727 Bond St. Ewa Beach, HI 96706

HAB, a private, non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Our philosophical foundation is that:

Blind people ought to be equal participants with their sighted peers in the productive pursuits of society. In order to achieve complete integration into society, blind people must be educated to believe that they can, and indeed should, share in the rights and responsibilities of the sighted.

-- Blind people must be perceived by all other citizens as being equal. Diligent efforts must be made to educate the sighted population in order for blind people to equally participate in the activities of the community.

-- Blind people themselves need to act to eliminate major obstacles by seeking necessary statutory changes and by insisting upon positive public policies from governmental agencies, including the judiciary.

HB-1945-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2022 2:25:57 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/17/2022 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stan Young	Testifying for Hawaii State committee of Blind Vendors	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Stan Young, Chairperson, Hawaii State Committee of Blind Vendors

Before the Committee on Human Services (HMS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

March 17, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members. I am Stan Young, fully supporting HB1945 H.D. 1.

It is a sad fact that only a small percentage (single digits) of the blind and visually impaired on the neighbor islands have had help from any agencies. It is discriminatory not to provide those blind on the neighbor islands the same services, training, and information that is available to us on Oahu. . We need to do better and help the blind and visually impaired on the neighbor islands.

National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii

Testimony before the Committee on Human Services (HMS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

March 17, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members. I am James Gashel, representing the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, fully supporting HB1945 H.D. 1, and suggesting an amendment.

This is an important bill for anyone who is blind or anyone who becomes blind while living on our neighbor islands. Added to not seeing, Isolation is a major barrier. Most services for the blind are based on Oahu and not readily available to neighbor island residents. The best help with independence and self-sufficiency is tied to a job goal; fine if you are 25 but not so fine if you are 75. We should do better by our neighbor island residents.

As found in the House HHH committee report, [HB1945 HD1 HSCR155-22](#): "...because of the concentration of support services on Oahu, blind or visually impaired individuals who live on the neighbor islands may be forced to choose between relocating to Oahu or living without services that would allow them to have full and integrated lives in their existing communities. This measure addresses the disparity in availability of support services by requiring the Department of Human Services to establish a pilot program to provide supplemental services to neighbor island residents who are blind or visually impaired."

Of course, it is true that neighbor island residents may receive training here on Oahu at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Services for the Blind branch, Ho`opono, but this often requires a period of from 6 to 8 months and some times more, leaving home, for example on the big island, and moving to Oahu, at least during the time of training. This is great for those who can do it, but expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. HB1945 says we can do better.

At its core this bill acknowledges the need for a supplemental services program for blind and visually impaired people who are neighbor island residents. The services authorized would not replace training at Ho`opono; quite the opposite. More than anything else, this bill would give neighbor island residents a pathway out of isolation. This bill means hope for better opportunities to enable blind and visually impaired people to improve their lives.

The bill includes a detailed list of services described as peer-to-peer outreach, sight loss adjustment, peer counseling support, and mobility training. Nine specific services are listed. Support for transportation, referred to as "special needs transportation," would also be provided. This section recognizes the serious limitations faced by blind and visually impaired people who are unable to drive but live in areas where having access to and use of a vehicle is a necessity since public transportation is infrequent or often not available at all. nonetheless, support for special needs transportation is intended to supplement and not replace any public transportation services available.

Regarding the nine services listed as outreach and training, the advantage of peer support provided by qualified volunteers is fundamental to this bill. Think of it as blind people helping other blind people. Who could be more motivated to help others than those of us who have had the advantages which come from excellent training and services? We are the aloha state. When this bill is passed blind people will have the opportunity to reach out and teach other blind people; expressing the aloha spirit with our peers on the neighbor islands. Please help us to use our skills in service to the state and to our fellow blind people in need within our state.

Regarding our suggested amendment, this may be more appropriate for the WAM committee, but you may want to be aware of our thinking on implementation of the bill. You can find the amendment appended to this statement.

As to implementation, HB1945 H.D. 1 has a blank appropriation. The amendment we suggest proposes an appropriation of \$25,000 for fiscal year 22-23 to be used by the Department of Human Services for program planning in conjunction with blind neighbor island residents. The bill, as written, would sunset on June 30, 2025. Therefore, with an initial year for program planning, two remaining years could be used for service delivery.

enactment of HB1945 will truly be a "win, win," proposition for the people of our state. The need on the neighbor islands is known and acknowledged. Building on the strength of services provided by the state on Oahu, we can and should do better for our peers who live on our neighbor islands. Supplementation of existing services, not duplication, is needed. Smart use of qualified volunteers will give blind people the chance to serve others. This approach is consistent with our values. Mahalo for your support to move this bill forward into law.

Proposed amendment to HB1945 H.D. 1

Offered by National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii

Submitted to HMS on 3-15-22

Purpose: to specify an appropriation amount and allowed purposes for fiscal year 2022-23

Proposed amendment to section 3 of HB1945 H.D. 1

(A) After the dollar sign insert 25,000; and

(B) after “fiscal year 2022-23,” strike the remainder of the section and insert: to be used for planning the pilot program; provided that:

(1) The Department shall consult with membership organizations of blind persons based on the neighbor islands and establish a pilot program work group composed of neighbor island residents who are blind;

(2) The work group and the Department shall develop a written implementation plan, pilot program performance period, and a program budget to be submitted to the legislature no later than thirty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2023;

(3) The Department shall include funding for the pilot program in its regular budget request submitted in 2023; and

(4) Any funds appropriated pursuant to this section shall be in addition to and shall not supplant any portion of the base budget for any state or county agency providing services for blind or visually impaired persons.”

Brandon G. Young

Testimony of Brandon Young

Before the Committee on Human Services (HMS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

March 17, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon, Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members. I am Brandon Young, fully supporting HB1945 H.D. 1.

I am writing in support of this bill so that my blind brothers and sisters on the Neighbor Islands can receive services that are currently not available. Blind people on all of our islands should be able to receive the same services no matter which island you live on. Currently, if you want to receive state of the art services, you have to move to Oahu for a period of nine months to one year. This could be an extreme hardship for you and your family and something that not all blind residents are able to do. This bill would propose the funding and management of a pilot program for blind individuals to visit the outer islands and to provide services that are currently only offered as a part of the New Visions programs held at the Ho`opono Services for the Blind building at 1901 Bachelot St. I hope you would consider our bill and to pass this measure along. Blind people on the outer islands are in serious need of proper blindness services. Passing this bill would help in solving this problem. I want to thank you for your time in scheduling this bill for a hearing. Again, I would urge you pass this bill so it can move forward in the legislative process and so we can provide wonderful services to all of those on our outer islands.

Mahalo,

Brandon

Testimony of Donald Sakamoto Before the Committee on Human Services (HMS) Hawaii State Senate Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022 March 17, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on HB1945 HD1.

Good afternoon, Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and committee members. I am Donald Sakamoto, in full support of HB1945.

This bill will require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor island residents, with funds to be appropriated for this purpose. Why is this bill needed, and why do I support it? Let me answer the second question first. I am a blind Oahu resident who has lived my life as a blind person for 38 years since the day I was diagnosed by my eye physician in 1984. As a result, I am speaking to you from my firsthand experience. I have been so thankful every day to have received quality blindness related training however, I know and have known first hand of many of other blind people who have not had the same opportunity. Every day without quality training leads to missed opportunities and lost time which cannot be regained. For many, I truly know that blindness seems to impose overwhelming barriers, but I also know that this does not need to be so. Blindness does not need to be a barrier to living a full and productive life, and it is literally true that the impact of blindness on a person's life and livelihood can be reduced to nothing more than a burden. That has occurred in my life, and it can occur in the lives of others if given the opportunity for blindness related training, including outreach and encouragement provided by other people who are blind.

this bill finds there are some 12,000 people in our state who are blind or visually impaired; most of them on the island of Oahu. About two thousand live on one of our neighbor islands. As a result, it is sensible that the most comprehensive and by far the best blindness related training services are available on island of Oahu, due to economies of scale. We are so fortunate in Hawaii to have such high-quality training for the blind provided by our state program called Ho'opono, and its New Visions training center under the Department of Human Services in which I am a 2011 graduate. Of course, it is true that neighbor island residents may receive training at Ho'opono however, this often requires a period between 6 to 8 months and sometimes more, leaving home and moving to Oahu, at least during the time of training. This is great for those who can do it however, expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. At its core this bill acknowledges the need for a supplemental services program for blind and visually impaired people who are neighbor island residents. The services authorized would not replace training at Ho'opono it would be quite the opposite. More than anything else, this bill would give neighbor island residents a pathway out of isolation. This bill means hope for better opportunities to enable blind and visually impaired people to improve their lives. Think of it as blind people helping other blind people. Who could be more motivated to help others than those of us who have had the advantage of excellent qualified training and services? We are the aloha state. When this bill is passed blind people will have the opportunity to reach out and teach other blind people, expressing the aloha spirit with our peers on the neighbor islands. Famous "by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail" by Benjamin Franklin.

Mahalo and please let's "GO FOR BROKE" and move this bill forward.

Testimony of Virgil Stinnett Before the Committee on Human Services (HMS)
Hawaii State Senate Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 17, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members. My name is Virgil Stinnett, a blind entrepreneur in service to our Department of Defense, and elected president of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii in strong support of HB1945 H.D. 1.

I am blind and have lived a full life as a blind person since 1996 at the age of 26. I am speaking to you from firsthand experience. I did not initially receive good training, yet had excellent blind mentors, members of the National Federation of the Blind, until I finally attended a training center with excellent blindness skills and attitude training in 2006. Without the mentorship of other blind individuals and superior training at a qualified center, my life would not be as blessed and full as it has become. I am a Hawai'i based entrepreneur serving our Department of Defense for over 16 years. This would not be so without the opportunity and mentoring given to me early on when i became blind. I am committed to ensuring this is an opportunity for other blind and low vision individuals throughout our state.

Blind people mentoring blind people is one of many reasons this bill is so critical to our blind and low vision residents on our neighbor islands. I stand in full support of the testimony submitted by James Gashel, legislative director for the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i.

Mahalo and Aloha for your consideration in moving this important bill forward, in support of our independence and equality

Testimony of Katie Keim Before the Committee on Human Services (HMS)
Hawaii State Senate Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 17, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members. My name is Katie Keim, an elected leader and member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i. I am in full support of HB1945 H.D.1.

I am blind and have had the opportunity to live a full life as a blind person 27 of my 63 years of life. I am speaking to you from firsthand experience as a Hawai'i blind career woman, who never thought I would work again, yet with exceptional opportunity and training, only lost 2 years of employment due to my blindness at the age of 36.

Personally I have been blessed to have received superior blindness related training and opportunity for years of blind people mentoring blind people through the National Federation of the Blind, but know and have known so many others who have not had the same opportunity. Anytime without excellent blindness skills and attitude mentoring and training, is lost time that cannot ever be recovered for the many I know and have known. Long distance mentoring helps but does not replace first hand training. Blindness need not be a barrier to living a full and productive life. I am an example of what excellent blind to blind mentoring and training and opportunity can mean, that the impact of blindness on a person's life and livelihood can be reduced to nothing more than a mere nuisance. It is my hope and commitment it will be the experience of other blind people in Hawai'i.

Each blind person has their own story of blind people mentoring blind people that is the strongest part of their personal success along with opportunity for good training. Yet many who are no longer of an age seeking employment, many who have family obligations on our neighbor islands, cannot commit to the time on Oahu for Ho'opono's training, or are not eligible for vocational services offered by DVR, suffer without opportunity this bill would give them.

This is why this bill is so critical to our neighbor island blind and low vision residents, supplementing not replacing Ho'opono's services, establishing opportunity for all our blind residents of Hawai'i.

With this in mind, I stand in full support of the testimony submitted by James Gashel, Legislative Director for the NFB of Hawaii and request your commitment to this bill passing.

Mahalo and Aloha for your consideration in moving this important bill forward, in support of our independence and equality

HB-1945-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2022 9:59:24 PM

Testimony for HMS on 3/17/2022 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joel Cho	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee,

My name is Joel Cho and I strongly support HB1945 because I want people from the neighbor islands who are blind or going blind, to be provided with the same necessary skills to maintain their independence while in the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness that we should all be blessed with.

Aloha and Thank you for your support.

Testimony of Hoku Burrows Before the Committee on Human Services (HMS)
Hawaii State Senate Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 17, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members. My name is Hoku Burrows, a blind woman and member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i, fully supporting HB1945 H.D. 1.

This is a critical bill for our neighbor island blind and low vision residents. Speaking to you from firsthand experience. Growing up on the island of Molokai, I did not initially receive good training, and had to relocate At a young age as my disability was diagnosed with no resources available to us on Molokai, it forced me to move to Oahu away from my family while in my early twenties. My sister was not so fortunate, needing other kinds of disability services, moving away from family as a young teenager to Honolulu.

When I finally met blind mentors, post my years of adult employment, members of the National Federation of the Blind, it was the turning point in my independence, self-advocacy and confidence as a blind woman. Without the mentorship of other blind people, I would not be where I am today, able to care for myself and participate fully in life and my community giving back.

I support the appropriations amendment proposed by NFB of Hawaii to appropriate \$25,000 for fiscal year 2022-23 to be used for program planning, not actual service delivery.

Mahalo for your support and consideration in passing this bill.

Testimony of Leni Ebisutani

Before the Committee on Human Services (HMS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

March 17, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members. I am Leni Ebisutani, fully supporting HB1945 H.D. 1.

This is an important bill for anyone who is blind or anyone who becomes blind while living on our neighbor islands. It is true that neighbor island residents can get training here on Oahu at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Services for the Blind branch, Ho`opono, but this often requires a period of from 6 to 8 months and some times more, leaving home, for example on the big island, and moving to Oahu, at least during the time of training. This is great for those who can do it, but expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. HB1945 says we can do better.

The bill includes a detailed list of services described as pier to pier outreach, sight loss adjustment, pier counseling support, and mobility training. Nine specific services are listed. The advantage of pier support provided by qualified volunteers is fundamental to this bill. Think of it as blind people helping other blind people. Who could be more motivated? We are the aloha state. When this bill is passed blind people will have the opportunity to reach out and teach other blind people; expressing the aloha spirit with our piers on the neighbor islands.

Please help us to use our skills in service to the state and to our fellow blind people in need. enactment of HB1945 will be a "win, win," proposition. The need on the neighbor islands is known and acknowledged. Supplementation of existing services, not duplication, is needed. Smart use of qualified volunteers will give blind people the chance to serve others. This approach is consistent with our values. Mahalo for your support.

Testimony of Jaclyn Borsa
Before the Committee on Human Services (HMS)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 17, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Ihara, and members. I am Jaclyn Borsa, fully supporting HB1945 H.D. 1.

This is an important bill for anyone who is blind or anyone who becomes blind while living on our neighbor islands. Added to not seeing, Isolation is a major barrier. Most services for the blind are based on Oahu and not readily available to neighbor island residents. The best help with independence and self-sufficiency is tied to a job goal; fine if you are 25 but not so fine if you are 75. We should do better by our neighbor island residents.

It is true that neighbor island residents can get training here on Oahu at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Services for the Blind branch, Ho`opono, but this often requires a period of from 6 to 8 months and some times more, leaving home, for example on the big island, and moving to Oahu, at least during the time of training. This is great for those who can do it, but expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. HB1945 says we can do better.

The services authorized would not replace training at Ho`opono. This bill would give neighbor island residents a pathway out of isolation. This bill means hope for better opportunities to enable blind and visually impaired people to improve their lives.

The bill includes a detailed list of services described as peer-to-peer outreach, sight loss adjustment, peer counseling support, and mobility training. Nine specific services are listed. The advantage of peer support provided by qualified volunteers is fundamental to this bill. Think of it as blind people helping other blind people. Who could be more motivated? We are the aloha state. When this bill is passed blind people will have the opportunity to reach out and teach other blind people; expressing the aloha spirit with our peers on the neighbor islands.

Please help us to use our skills in service to the state and to our fellow blind people in need. enactment of HB1945 will be a "win, win," proposition. The need on the neighbor islands is known and acknowledged. Supplementation of existing services, not duplication, is needed. Smart use of qualified volunteers will give blind people the chance to serve others. This approach is consistent with our values. Mahalo for your support.