



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**

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**Testimony COMMENTING on HB 439 HD1
RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES**

REPRESENTATIVE KYLE T. YAMASHITA, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE LISA KITAGAWA, VICE CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date: 2/24/2023

Room Number: 308 & VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

1 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure may impact the priorities identified in the Governor's
2 Executive Budget Request.

3 **Agency Testimony:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) appreciates the intent of this
4 measure, provided the measure's passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities in the
5 Governor's Budget Request and offers the following comments.

6 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this measure is to establish and appropriate funds for
7 an immigrant service and access unit within the Office of Community Services (OCS) to
8 promote economic self-sufficiency, inclusion, and community integration for immigrants by
9 improving access to appropriate services.

10 Hawaii is one of the most culturally diverse states and has one of the highest proportions of non-
11 English speakers in the nation. Many of these non-English speakers are immigrants and
12 migrants with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-
13 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, an estimate of 25.9% or 353,663 of
14 Hawaii residents, 5 years and older, speak a language other than English at home. Of those,
15 152,929 or 11.2% indicated that they speak English "less than very well."

16 English proficiency (or a lack of) has a great impact on people's economic and social activities,
17 and health literacy and wellness. It effects their ability to successfully access education,

1 employment, and important public assistance, benefits, programs and services. An immigrant
2 service and access unit will provide a critical link to communication and make services
3 accessible to individuals with LEP.

4 This measure will allow OLA to work closely with other partners to further improve language
5 access in our state government. If the measure is passed, OLA will collaborate with OCS to
6 assist immigrant and migrant individuals with Limited English Proficiency to the extent
7 allowable by law.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH B. GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNTSMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

JOVANIA DOMINGO DELA CRUZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 420
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www.hawaii.gov/labor
Phone: (808) 586-8675 / Fax: (808) 586-8685
Email: dliir.ocs@hawaii.gov

IN REPLY, REFER TO:
OCS 23.1086

February 23, 2023

To: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair,
The Honorable Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair, and
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Date: Friday, February 24, 2023

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Place: Conference Room 308, State Capitol & Videoconference

From: 
Jovanie Domingo Dela Cruz, Executive Director
DLIR – Office of Community Services

Position: Support

Re: H.B. 439, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

H.B. 439, H.D. 1 would create a unit within the Office of Community Services (OCS), to be named the “Immigrant services and access unit” to promote economic self-sufficiency, inclusion, and community integration for immigrants in Hawaii by improving their access to appropriate services, resources, and benefits.

The unit would offer services that would include English language training; translation and interpretation; workforce development training; legal services; assistance in obtaining citizenship and naturalization; and programs to assist in learning about and accessing government services.

The bill directs that the unit would coordinate with non-profit organizations, and with support from grant funds, provide for direct services to immigrants. The unit would coordinate with other State and county agencies that serve immigrants, the unit would explore all available federal resources, including grants; and it would establish an advisory committee with representatives from immigrant communities, organizations that serve immigrants, and appropriate State and county agencies.

The bill would appropriate funds for this unit, and would provide funding for staff: two FTE positions – coordinator and clerical positions for FY 2023-2024; and five FTE positions for State FY 2024-2025 – one coordinator, one clerical position, and three specialists.

II. CURRENT LAW

The Office of Community Services (OCS) is an agency attached to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. OCS was created by the Legislature by Act 305, SLH 1985, codified as Chapter 371K, Hawai'i Revised Statutes.

The mission of OCS is to eliminate the causes and conditions of poverty for economically disadvantaged persons, immigrants, and refugees in the State of Hawaii, by facilitating and enhancing the development, delivery, and coordination of effective programs for these persons and communities to enable them to achieve and maintain greater economic self-sufficiency and integration into Hawaii's society.

III. COMMENTS ON THE HOUSE BILL

OCS supports the intent of this bill, provided that appropriations would not replace or adversely impact priorities in the Governor's Executive Budget Request.

H.B. 439, H.D. 1 would reinforce the mandate that OCS already has pursuant to HRS Chapter 371K to provide many of the same programs as are listed in Section (a)(1) of the proposed new section in Chapter 371K.

We wish to clarify and emphasize that the Office of Community Services is not a direct services agency. OCS contracts with non-profit organizations to provide direct services to program beneficiaries, under oversight by OCS. OCS administers relevant and appropriate federal programs "off the shelf", and OCS designs new programs for which it seeks to obtain funding from the State and potentially other sources. OCS expects that the services provided by this new legislation would also be provided by OCS through contracts with non-profit service providers, and not through direct services.

By an amendment in the Human Service Committee, HD 1, this bill would now merely authorize, rather than require, the OCS Immigrant Services and Access (ISA) unit to offer a suite of services – language training, translation, workforce development, citizenship and naturalization training, and assistance in accessing government services. This new language has the beneficial effect of giving OCS the flexibility to add new services beyond those already enumerated.

HB 439 HD 1, as currently drafted, would mandate that the services to be provided by the proposed ISA unit at OCS “shall be available” to persons in all of the following categories:

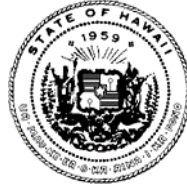
- (1) Immigrants;
- (2) Refugees;
- (3) Compact of Free Association with the United States residents;
- (4) Undocumented persons; and
- (5) Other persons, regardless of the person's immigration status.

This mandate would create problems of incompatibility that would impair services in two different ways. First, the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) prohibits OCS from using the funding that OCS receives from ORR for refugee services to benefit undocumented persons. See 45 CFR § 400.43(a) (1)-(6). To avoid commingling ORR funds with State funds, OCS would be obliged to refrain from using ORR funding within the ISA unit. This prohibition might well require OCS to use its ORR refugee funds and services outside the ISA unit, or else cease receiving ORR funding altogether. At best, OCS would have to maintain two separate programs, one using ORR funds and one using State funds. Accordingly, retaining Category (4) in the bill, as a mandate, would likely create a great deal of confusion and administrative difficulties.

The second challenge would be the requirement that OCS serve persons in Category (5) in programs administered by the ISA unit. Having Category (5) in the bill, if it becomes law, would mandate that the ISA unit serve people who have no connection to the underserved community of immigrants and refugees. This mandate would undermine the entire concept and purpose of the ISA unit. This mandate would take away funds from immigrants and refugees and would make it very difficult for OCS to maintain a coherent focus for ISA services. Therefore, OCS respectfully recommends that this category be removed from this bill.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 23, 2023

TO: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [HB 439 HD1](#) - RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES.

Hearing: February 24, 2023, 11:30 a.m.
Conference Room 308 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure and defers to the Office of Community Services, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

PURPOSE: The bill establishes and appropriates funds for an immigrant services and access unit within the office of community services. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD1)

The HD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Authorizing, rather than requiring, the Immigrant Services and Access Unit to provide certain services and programs;
- (2) Changing the effective date to June 30, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

Immigrants in Hawaii are vital members of the community and make up 18% of the workforce. No matter the reason for immigration, many immigrants faced hardships in their home countries to come to the United States to pursue their dreams and a better life for themselves and their families. Many immigrants have limited English proficiency (LEP), and

seeking legal information and resources in English and navigating the government systems is difficult.

Reinvesting immigrant services in the OCS will support immigrant, migrant, and refugee populations transitioning to life in the United States. The Department also encourages the Legislature to provide funds to DLIR OCS to consider serving Hawaii's migrant populations. Importantly, having trustworthy immigrant services may also prevent harm perpetrated by the unfortunate elements of society who prey on vulnerable individuals and immigrants.

If the measure passes, DHS will collaborate with DLIR OCS to assist immigrant and migrant individuals and families to the extent allowable by law.

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

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 5:14:05 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglass S. Adams	Department of Research and Development, County of Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in SUPPORT of HB 439 HD1, which establishes and appropriates funds for an immigrant services and access unit within the office of community services. Our department provides immigration support services within the County of Hawaii. The opportunity to coordinate and collaborate with a state immigrant services unit will increase our capacity to help our marginalized and vulnerable populations on Hawaii Island.

We strongly encourage the Committee to move HB 439 HD1 forward with a POSITIVE recommendation for House passage.

very respectfully

Douglass S Adams

Director, Dept of Research & Development

County of Hawaii



Testimony in support of HB439 HD1
RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES
Submitted by Hawai`i Friends of Civil Rights,
Co-chairs: Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman

Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights strongly support HB439 HD1 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES. This bill establishes and appropriates money and positions for an Immigrant Services and Access unit within the Office of Community Services, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

We appreciate the legislature's past support of the Filipino Legislative Caucus priorities: HCR 169 (2021) and SB 2457(2022). Community leaders and the legislature acknowledge that OCS resources for immigrants were significantly reduced over the years and provided recommendation and resources for immigrants and the Office of Community Service to meet its legislative mandate relating to immigrants and refugees.

We respectfully request you support HB 439 hd1 (part of 2023 Filipino Legislative Caucus package). This bill will establish an Immigrant Services and Access unit within the Office of Community Services whose purpose is to promote economic self-sufficiency, inclusion, and community integration for immigrants in our state. There are over 250,000 foreign born persons in the state; nearly half of all immigrants to Hawai'i are from the Philippines (46%); Japan (8%), China (8%), Korea (7%), Micronesia (5%), Vietnam (4%)and Mexico (2%). Fifty-seven percent of Hawaii's immigrants are naturalized US citizens and many have US born children.

We believe an Immigrant Services and Access unit will improve OCS's capacity to increase and improve services to serve the immigrant community who face barriers to accessing government resources and are excluded from full participation in our community. We respectfully ask you to include our recommended amendments and support HB 439 hd1.

Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman, co-chairs
Hawai`i Friends of Civil Service

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2023 12:46:39 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary K Ochs	Hawai'i Workers Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

The Hawai'i Workers Center strongly supports HB349. We have previously submitted testimony. We believe this is a win-win for immigrants, our economy and all residents of our state. Helping immigrants to thrive means we all thrive!

Mahalo for your consideration.



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB439, HD1
RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair**

Hearing Date: February 24th at 11:30 AM in Conference Room 308

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) is in full **support** of HB439 HD1, which establishes and appropriates moneys for an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services.

As an organization representing more than 25 immigrant-serving/led nonprofits across the state, we support HB439 HD1 because it recognizes the valuable contributions that immigrants make to Hawai'i and acknowledges the barriers they face in accessing government services and participating fully in their communities.

The state of Hawai'i has one of the highest ratios of foreign-born individuals per capita in the country but we lack many of the systems and services that states such as Washington, California, Illinois or New York have. While our population size is much smaller than these states, with coordinated effort we could better serve and support our immigrant residents to contribute even more fully to our collective economic, civic, and political life.

HB439 HD1 establishes an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services. This unit would offer services such as English language training, translation and interpretation, workforce development training, legal services, assistance in obtaining citizenship and naturalization, and programs to learn about and access government services. This unit would also coordinate with nonprofit organizations, other immigrant-serving state agencies, and county immigrant services offices and explore all available federal resources.



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hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

HB439 HD1 is necessary to ensure that all Hawaii's immigrants have equal access to government programs and services.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Chen'.

Catherine Chen
Co-Coordinator/Refounder, Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB439 - RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair

Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

January 31, 2023 | 9:30 am | House Conference Room 329

Aloha Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,

The Legal Clinic (“TLC”) submits testimony in **SUPPORT of HB439**, which establishes and appropriates moneys for an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services, which would be responsible for offering resources such as language services, workforce development training, legal services—such as assistance with obtaining citizenship—and programs to learn about and access government services. This unit would also coordinate with nonprofit organizations, other immigrant-serving state agencies, and county immigrant services offices to explore all available federal resources.

TLC provides immigration legal services to Hawai‘i’s low-income immigrant and migrant communities, to help keep families unified, and to promote residents’ economic self-sufficiency, longer-term security, and civic engagement. As an organization that witnesses first-hand the struggles of the state’s growing immigrant community, TLC supports HB439 because it recognizes the valuable contributions that immigrants make to Hawai‘i and the barriers they face in accessing government services and participating fully in their communities. In Hawai‘i where nearly one in five residents are born abroad, only Hawai‘i County and Maui County have offices of immigrant services, both under-resourced and understaffed.

According to the 2020 Census, immigrants (those born outside the United States) make up over 18% of Hawaii’s population (273,012 of our residents). This is compared to 13.7% of the U.S. population. Moreover, of our foreign-born population, over 41% (112,050) have not yet naturalized and become U.S. citizens. Hawai‘i is also home to another migrant community in need of services, that being the residents from the states comprising the Compact of Free Association (“COFA”)—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Palau. These residents are entitled to migrate to the U.S. under the Compact, which has its origins in the United States’ use of these countries for nuclear testing and other military purposes. An estimated 18,500 COFA nationals live in Hawai‘i, and they are believed to make up the fastest growing portion of our migrant community.

Low-income immigrant communities were disproportionately impacted by the lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many experienced job losses, lower rates of healthcare coverage, less access to unemployment insurance and other public benefits due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the system, and much more. It is clear to TLC that designated State-level positions focused on the unique needs of immigrants and migrants (COFA), including language access, integration (social, civic), legal status adjustments, and other services, would make a significant difference in addressing these barriers that migrants face, leveling the playing field for those who need assistance navigating complex processes and systems. Furthermore, nonprofit service providers who work directly with immigrants and migrants would benefit from the Office’s assistance with coordinating immigrant-serving partners and connecting to federal resources.

Passage of HB439 is necessary to ensure that all of Hawai‘i’s immigrants have equal access to government programs and services, and awareness of community resources that can put them on a path to increased security, well-being, and civic engagement .

Mahalo nui for your time and consideration,

Bettina Mok

Executive Director, The Legal Clinic

director@thelegalclinicahawaii.org



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hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB439
RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

Hearing Date: February 24th, 2023

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) is in full **support** of HB439, which establishes and appropriates moneys for an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services.

As an organization representing more than 25 immigrant-serving/led nonprofits across the state, we support HB439 because it recognizes the valuable contributions that immigrants make to Hawai‘i and acknowledges the barriers they face in accessing government services and participating fully in their communities.

The state of Hawai‘i has one of the highest ratios of foreign-born individuals per capita in the country but we lack many of the systems and services that states such as Washington, California, Illinois or New York have. While our population size is much smaller than these states, with coordinated effort we could better serve and support our immigrant residents to contribute even more fully to our collective economic, civic, and political life.

HB439 establishes an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services. This unit would offer services such as English language training, translation and interpretation, workforce development training, legal services, assistance in obtaining citizenship and naturalization, and programs to learn about and access government services. This unit would also coordinate with nonprofit organizations, other immigrant-serving state agencies, and county immigrant services offices and explore all available federal resources.

We are requesting the following amendments to the bill that will allow the Immigrant Services and Access unit authority and flexibility to identify and provide various appropriate and comprehensive services.

Section 2, Page 5, Line 3: change the word “shall” to “may”

Section 2, Page 5, Line 4: The line should read “Offer services, including but not limited to:”



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hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

Section 2, Page 6, Line 3: The line should read “Oversee and monitor the Immigrant Resource Center Program”

Section 2, Page 6, Line 4 change the word “shall” to “may”

SB812 is necessary to ensure that all Hawaii's immigrants have equal access to government programs and services.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Liza Ryan Gill

Coordinator/Refounder, Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 11:21:02 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sergio Alcubilla	Hawaii Workers Center	Support	In Person

Comments:

February 23, 2023

Hawaii State House of Representatives
Committee on Finance
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

RE: Strong Support for H.B. 439 RELATING TO IMMIGRANT SERVICES.

Dear Chair Rep. Yamashita, Vice-Chair Rep. Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee on Finance:

The Hawaii Workers Center envisions a Hawaii in which all workers are empowered to exercise their right to organize for their social, economic and political well-being.

It is a resource of information, education, training and organizing for Hawaii's low-wage and immigrant workers.

The Hawaii Workers Center stands in strong support for H.B. 439 to establish and appropriate funds for an immigrant services and access unit within the office of community services.

As a non-profit organization that focuses on organizing immigrant and migrant communities, having an immigrant services and access unit as a liaison to state government is critical to ensuring that these communities are able to fully participate in our democratic government. Moreover, it would also greatly benefit other non-profit organizations as there is an identified contact within the executive branch that can serve as one-stop resource center for issues impacting immigrant and migrant communities.

Hawaii's rich history of immigration from around the world and the success of many of these immigrant communities generations later is a testament to what makes Hawaii a special place. Passing H.B. 439 honors the legacy of many of the immigrant workers who came to work in the sugar and pineapple plantations that many here in Hawaii can trace their own history to. The Hawaii Workers Center urges this committee to pass H.B. 439.

Sincerely,

Sergio J. Alcubilla
Executive Director



Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: House Committee on Finance

Re: **HB 439, HD1 - Relating to Immigrant Services**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 24, 2023, 11:30 AM

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB 439, HD1**. This bill establishes and appropriates funds for an immigrant services and access unit within the office of community services.

Especially since the start of the pandemic, non-profit organizations like ours have worked hard to help immigrant families access the benefits that they qualify for. As a child-focused organization, we've focused mostly on outreach to parents who qualify for Pandemic EBT (food purchasing funds for low-income families) as well as the Child Tax Credit and other tax credits for working families.

**HCAN Speaks! Board
of Directors**

Liza Ryan Gill
President

Nick Kacprowski, J.D.
Treasurer

Mandy Fernandes
Secretary

Teri Keliipuleole
Jasmine Slovak
Erica Yamauchi

While working on this outreach, we learned about the barriers that immigrant families in Hawai'i face when trying to access government benefits. For example, we found that our state departments lack the resources to provide meaningful language access, and that the federal government and national advocacy organizations do not provide translations of materials and applications¹ in the languages that are the most spoken by LEP students in Hawai'i² – such as Ilocano, Marshallese, and Chuukese.

The unit proposed by this bill would help fill such gaps. It would offer services such as English language training, translation and interpretation, workforce development training, legal services, assistance in obtaining citizenship and naturalization, and programs to learn about and access government services. This unit would also coordinate with nonprofit organizations, other immigrant-serving state agencies, and county immigrant services offices and explore all available federal resources.

As one of the states with the highest portion of foreign-born residents,³ combined with the lack of existing resources for immigrant services, Hawai'i needs to devote a unit to ensure that all of our immigrant families have equal access to government programs and services.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo, Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/translated-applications>

² Hawai'i Data Exchange Partnership, <https://www.hawaiiexp.org/data-products/hawaii-english-language-learners-data-story/>

³ Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/312701/percentage-of-population-foreign-born-in-the-us-by-state/>

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 5:08:52 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rob Van Tassell	Catholic Charities Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) supports HB439, HD1. CCH provides legal immigration services for low income immigrants and migrants, and we work with many low income immigrants throughout our 40+ programs, from children & families to elders. This bill would provide some of the support they need on their journey to become self sufficient and contributing members of our island community. Thank you.

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2023 10:39:37 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn Weygan-Hildebrand	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings! In the short and long-term, this helps government deliver programs in ways that will pay off well. Immigrants will know how to tap resources better, navigate what it takes to thrive in the islands faster and feel welcomed as part of the community. Of course, for government to see these results, it is crucial that implementation be culturally-sensible and not just compliance-oriented. Mahalo.

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2023 11:12:25 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa and members of the House Committee on Finance,

I am in strong support of HB439 HD1. This new unit within the OCS is essential for ensuring that immigrants in Hawai‘i have access to the resources they need.

Mahalo.

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2023 4:37:06 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

As a concerned citizen and public health professional, I am writing in support of HB439 HD1, which establishes and appropriates moneys for an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services.

As the son of Vietnamese refugees who become active, contributing members of society, I support HB439 HD1 because it recognizes the valuable contributions that immigrants make to Hawai'i, despite the ongoing barriers they face in accessing government services and participating fully in their communities. In my current public health profession, I have borne witness to immigrant in Hawai'i being unable to access needed and desired health services due to administrative challenges like identification and paperwork.

These challenges will be ameliorated byt this bill, which establishes an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services. This unit would offer services such as English language training, translation and interpretation, workforce development training, legal services, assistance in obtaining citizenship and naturalization, and programs to learn about and access government services. Additionally, this unit would also coordinate with nonprofit organizations, other immigrant-serving state agencies, and county immigrant services offices and explore all available federal resources.

HB439 HD1 is necessary to ensure that all Hawaii's immigrants have equal access to government programs and services, thereby ensuring both community health and economic prosperity.

With aloha,

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/22/2023 8:17:31 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Will Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support HB439 HD1.

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 8:53:02 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Valerie Rose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB439

RELATING TO IMMIGRATION SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: February 24th, 2023

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB439, which establishes and appropriates moneys for immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services.

I support HB439 because many times when immigrants come to the United States, they leave behind everything in the hopes of making their lives better for their families. While the United States have many programs available for them to improve their lives, we need better coordination between programs to fully service them.

HB439 establishes immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services. This unit would offer services such as English Language training, translation and interpretation, workforce development training, legal services, assistance in obtaining citizenship and

naturalization, and programs to learn about and access government services. This unit would also coordinate with nonprofit organizations, other immigrant-serving state agencies, and county immigrant services offices and explore all available federal resources.

HB430 is necessary to ensure that all Hawaii's immigrants have equal access to government programs and services.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

Valerie Rose

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 9:10:24 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ashleigh Loa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Kitagawa, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB439, which establishes and appropriates moneys for an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services.

I support HB439 because it recognizes the valuable contributions that immigrants make to Hawaii and acknowledges the barriers they face in accessing government services and participating fully in their communities.

The bill establishes an immigrant services and access unit within the Office of Community Services. This unit would offer services such as English language training, translation and interpretation, workforce development training, legal services, assistance in obtaining citizenship and naturalization, and programs to learn about and access government services. This unit would also coordinate with nonprofit organizations, other immigrant-serving state agencies, and county immigrant services offices and explore all available federal resources.

HB439 is necessary to ensure that all Hawaii's immigrants have equal access to government programs and services.

Mahalo for your support and consideration

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 11:08:55 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
wilfredo tungol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Yamashita and members of the Finance Committee:

I am submitting written testimony in **strong support** of this bill HB439, HD1.

I am a former vice-president and board member of HawaiiJustice Immigration Center (fka Na Loi'o Legal Services) for over 10 years and I am very familiar with Hawaii's immigration population and their need for services.

Hawaii has one of the largest immigration population per capita in the country. For most immigrants, language is a problem. Related to this is their ability to access help that will help them to successfully integrate into our community. Contrary to popular beliefs, immigrants are not ftsin to our society. They are human resources asset that help our community economically and socially.

This bill provides a **hands up and not a hand out** by helping newly arrived immigrtants to dservices that will help them find jobs, social services, and other needed services that they may otherwise not know about. The intake centers will enable them to access help and information.

Moeny that is appropriated to staff the intake centers will be a worthwhile investment and therefore should be provided to the Office of Community Services.

Mahalo for your support.

Wilfredo Tungol

Pearl city, HI

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/23/2023 10:26:54 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marissa Halagao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Marissa Halagao and I am a current Filipino high school senior, providing a student voice in support of this bill. I testify in **strong support of House Bill 439** to allocate funds towards an immigrant service and access unit and in turn support and better the lives of Hawaii’s immigrants, who have long since been the foundation of our state. As a daughter of Filipino immigrants, I am of the largest immigrant ethnic group in Hawaii, as the bill recognizes that almost half of the immigrants in Hawaii come from the Philippines. As a Filipino American born and raised in Hawaii, I’ve never had to feel the pressure to constantly assimilate or deal with the ostracization of being labeled an “English Learner” student as if my multilingualism is an obstacle, not an asset. But I have friends and family members whose stories reflect these experiences, which have affected me. This support for this bill is for them, and all other immigrant or minority individuals who feel as if they are not entitled to the support and empowerment that they deserve.

These last few years, I have identified a passion towards advancing the empowerment and representation of Filipinos through our education system, working closely with Filipino students from across the state, many of whom are first-generation immigrants. As Filipino American, Filipino immigrants or mixed Filipinos, we’ve come together in the Filipino Curriculum Project, a student-driven initiative that I launched in 2021, aimed at designing and advocating for a social studies course dedicated to Filipino History and Culture in the HI Department of Education.

As a private school student who has admittedly felt removed from those outside of my self prescribed bubble, my eyes were opened to the large population of immigrants, specifically Filipino immigrants, in Hawaii’s education system. I learned of their immigration stories, which fueled a desire to increase curriculum representation for Filipino students so that they can feel seen.

Immigrants deserve empowerment and support in all sectors, not just in education. This bill would serve to uplift and cater towards immigrants’ needs, many of whom are students in our public education system. Programs that would “address the needs of immigrants and refugees who have limited English proficiency or are unfamiliar with government regulations and benefits” would not cause immigrant families to reject their heritage languages in order to achieve “success” like my parents had done. Instead, they would be offered services that would

provide clear and valuable support and actionable steps that are responsive to their needs and languages.

My student activism with the Filipino Curriculum Project teaches us to always circle back to our audience and how education should be responsive to the diversity of the community it serves. Policy should be the same. A Legislature that would support the wellbeing and inclusion of all immigrants would bolster Hawaii and improve the lives of friends and family members who have touched me and Hawaii in many ways. Prioritizing them sends a message to them that they matter. Which they do.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to and thoughtfully consider my student voice.

HB-439-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/24/2023 12:07:47 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/24/2023 11:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcella Alohalani Boido	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To All:

The reasons for supporting this bill have been amply described in the testimony previously submitted.

I am in agreement with all of it.

In particular, I support English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for immigrants. Federal law provides for these classes, but only for documented immigrants. I have no idea how many Hawaii immigrants are undocumented.

They live here, they work here, some of them marry into local families, and their children go to school here. What is clear is that they need ESL classes to help them further integrate into our community.

In Hawaii, when people see my fair complexion, blue eyes, and still-somewhat-blond hair, I doubt that most people think that my family members were immigrants. If anything, I'm mistaken as a Mainlander, because of my West Coast accent in English

When my father graduated medical school in Mexico, he was offered an internship at St. Francis Hospital. Eventually, he became Chief Resident. Sometimes, I explain that I was born in St. Francis Hospital, in the Territory of Hawaii.

In 1915, when my maternal grandparents arrived at Ellis Island with my four-year-old mother, ESL classes were widely available. They were a standard part of the immigrant experience. That was fortunate, because although my grandparents and my mom all spoke at least two languages, English was not one of them. My grandparents became fluent speakers of English and were able to read and write in it as well. My mother learned it in school.

Even now, many of my family members who live in the USA are immigrants. All of them have learned English.

I would like to see other people have the opportunity to learn English, regardless of their legal status in the USA.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

For the sake of our community, please pass HB 439.

Thank you.

Marcella Alohalani Boido, M.A.

Hawaii State Judiciary Certified Spanish Court Interpreter (Tier 4)

Moili'ili, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96826