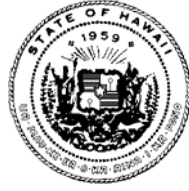


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

March 18, 2023

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 834 HD1 – RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE.**

Hearing: March 20, 2023, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill.

PURPOSE: This bill recognizes American Sign Language as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD1).

The HD1 defected the effective date and made technical amendments.

Each year, the Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) provides vocational rehabilitation services to over 200 Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers statewide. Many of these consumers use ASL to effectively communicate and navigate the world, including but not limited to education, training, and employment environments. DHS appreciates that codifying recognition of ASL would advance the public's understanding and acknowledgment that ASL is a discrete language and not merely signed English.

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



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • TTY (808) 586-8162 • Fax (808) 586-8129

March 20, 2023

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

House Bill 834 HD1 – Relating to American Sign Language

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 834 HD1 – Relating to American Sign Language.

American Sign Language is a complex visual-spatial language that is a linguistically complete and natural language. With signing, the brain processes linguistic information through the eyes. The shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movements, all play important parts in conveying information. American Sign Language is the backbone of American Deaf Culture.

Pursuant to the goal of increasing the number of competent sign language interpreters in the State, DCAB issues the Hawaii State Sign Language Interpreter Credential (HSSLIC) to interpreters who pass the Hawaii Quality Assurance System (HQAS) test or who possess a valid credential issued by an entity recognized by DCAB. Sign language interpreters interpret between two distinct languages – a sign language and a spoken language – by conveying equivalent and conceptually correct messages from one language to another. House Bill 834 HD1 would recognize that American Sign Language is a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director



HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

KOMIKINA PONO KĪWILA O HAWAI‘I

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411 HONOLULU, HI 96813 • PHONE: 586-8636 • FAX: 586-8655 • TDD: 568-8692

Monday, March 20, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.
Rm. 225 and Videoconference

To: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Liann Ebesugawa, Chair
and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: H.B. No. 834, H.D.1

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

H.B. No. 834, H.D.1, would add a new section to Chapter 1 of the Hawai‘i Revised Statutes which would recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary and cultural heritage. Just as is the case with languages that are characteristic of ancestry or national origin, ASL is a language that is closely tied to culture and identity.

Over 40 U.S. states recognize ASL to varying degrees, from a foreign language for school credits to the official language of that state's deaf population, with several enacting legislation similar to H.B. No. 834, H.D.1.

It is important to recognize that ASL is a distinct language and not just translated English, but a language with its own culture and identity. **The HCRC supports H.B. No. 834, H.D.1.**

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2023 6:11:14 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2023 1:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

In reality, ASL is its own fully developed autonomous language with its own grammar, syntax and cultural heritage. It is very rich and expressive. It is not merely just the English language in signs. As such, this bill appropriately acknowledges that.

From: [ASAD News](#)
To: [HHS Committee](#)
Subject: HB834 HD1 Recognizing ASL as a language
Date: Saturday, March 18, 2023 6:44:12 PM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Aloha State Association of the Deaf, the statewide membership organization representing Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind residents of Hawaii. We very strongly support passage of HB 834, HD 1 to recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as a language officially recognized by the State of Hawaii.

ASL is the native language of most Deaf Americans. ASL and English are taught, side-by-side, at the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind. This bilingual approach has increased the reading comprehension of HSDB students, while also improving their expressive and receptive communication skills.

We are hopeful that passage of this legislation, with its recognition of ASL - "our" first language right alongside our country's first language - will increase public awareness of our needs, increase pride within our community, and encourage hearing people to learn our beautiful language.

The Hawaii Revised Statutes, section 302-A-322 acknowledges American Sign Language in public schools, but falls short of recognizing it as a fully developed language.

American Sign Language has been used and passed down from one generation of Deaf people to the next for the last 200 years. Here in Hawaii, Georgia Morikawa established the Aloha State Association of the Deaf (ASAD) in 1973 to develop a positive image of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people with the public and within our community. The primary means of connection with members is ASL; with the assistance of sign language interpreters, it is the means by which we participate in school, in the community and access all services.

We urge your favorable support to pass this important bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Pono Tokioka
Vice President
Aloha State Association of the Deaf

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2023 10:24:35 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ed Chevy	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha! My name is Ed Chevy. I am a Deaf citizen of the United States of America. Born and raised in the land of diversity and the freedom of beliefs, values, traditions.

I wholeheartedly support HB834 HDI (Relating to ASL). I have always said to my people that communication is power! I am NOT communication impaired because ASL is a language, not a study of contradictions.

Helen Keller said Deaf people is solated from people. Actually, Deafness was a greater affliction than blindness. We never judge Deaf using the power of ASL.

This is the 21st century. America is going to be a different country. We learn, we change, we move on and we get better. Please support HB834. It's a future...I promised you this.

Mahalo nui,

E!

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2023 9:13:28 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherry Shimizu	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Testimony of Sherry Shimizu

Submitted to the Hawaii State Senate,

Committee on Health and Human Services (HHS)

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Monday, March 20, 2023

Time 1300

Hawaii State Capitol CR 225 & Videoconference

Re: SB 610 / HB 834 HD1 - Relating to American Sign Language

Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Members:

My name is Sherry Shimizu, I am a graduate of Pearl City High School and received a bachelor of science degree at Rochester Institute of Technology in New York with a major in Packaging Science or better known as Engineering and minor is Criminal Justice. I am a resident of Pearl City, Senatorial District 16.

I am testifying today to express my very strong support for SB 610 / HB 834 HD1, which will recognize American Sign Language, or ASL as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammatical structure, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage. This bill is very important to me personally, because I have been Deaf in one ear and Hard-of-hearing in the other ear all of my life. My parents, siblings, other family members and friends are also either Deaf, Hard-of-hearing, and or Deaf-Blind, so we all use ASL in our everyday conversation.

ASL is not Hawaii Sign Language nor merely signed English, because most people in other countries recognize ASL is predominantly used in North America. Furthermore, ASL was already recognized here as a world language for public school language requirement purposes according to Act 152, Session Laws of Hawaii 2016. The recognition of ASL as an official state

language in Hawaii will ensure Deaf, Hard-of-hearing, and Deaf-Blind children and adults have “access to their language to take part in society. Recognizing this language results in more equitable access. This includes employment opportunities and more awareness in the public, especially when more Deaf (and Hard-of-hearing and Deaf-Blind) people assume leadership roles.” (Source: Catalleya Storm, author of “Why sign language should be an official language” hearinglikeme.com)

Hawaii is unique with multiple cultures and since we recognize ‘Ōlelo Hawai’i (spoken language) as Hawaiian Language that is not pidgin nor creole, I want to emphasize ASL is a Language that is not gesture. Just like ‘Ōlelo Hawai’i (spoken language) has proper pronunciation for vowels and consonants and the Hawaiian alphabet consists of 13 letters, ASL has fingerspelling letters only used in North America. Fingerspelling in ASL is distinct from the fingerspelling in British Sign Language, even though both languages use the same English vowels and consonants. We also know in Hawaii, there are many influences from other countries historically, however we still recognize the differences in spoken and written format between English and Hawaiian languages; similarly to locals signing in ASL, we recognize signs used in the community to communicate and comprehend each other across the 8 islands naturally with ease without any singular, specific external force.

Please help us pass this bill to recognize American Sign Language as one of the official languages in Hawai’i. Mahalo for your support and sincerely, Sherry Shimizu

Honolulu, March 17, 2023

Aloha, dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee.

My name is Fanny WT Yeh. I moved to live on Oahu, Hawaii, from Paris, France since mid-July, 2022. I was born deaf in Taiwan and have lived in Brazil, the USA (Maryland, NYC & Hawaii), Indonesia & France. I communicated with people using sign languages in Taiwan, Brazil, the USA and France while I lived there.

I'm writing to give my full support for the Bill HB 834 HD1 relating to recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Here are the reasons for my testimony as follows:

BETTER INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION: Teaching ASL in public schools helps to give deaf, deaf-blind (DB) and hard-of-hearing (HH) students more opportunities for interactions with hearing classmates. Deaf and HH people proficient in ASL may be interested in becoming ASL teachers since ASL is the third most popular foreign language class taught in schools and universities.

BETTER AWARENESS: ASL is used by a significant large number of people in the USA, and to recognize it as an official language would bring better understanding, greater acknowledge and deeper respect for their linguistic heritage. ASL promotes the validation of an identity as a human which will increase public awareness and better understanding of Deaf, DB and HH Community and their needs to be involved in the public and education.

BETTER MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS: ASL promotes better awareness of and sensitivity to the Deaf, DB and HH community. Learning ASL will develop a strong appreciation for Deaf, DB and HH culture, and can promote understanding and acceptance of the language among others. ASL promotes cultural preservation by demonstrating a unique and distinct language with its own history, culture, and traditions as well to preserve their important aspect of Deaf Education and Human/Mental Health services.

BETTER LEARNING CAPABILITIES: ASL promotes younger population a better listener with more diverse and to boost the individual to become easier to learn another new language. Research has shown that using ASL actually increases a child's verbal skills. Using ASL can actually help to facilitate and encourage language development. ASL provides children with earlier access to other languages.

BETTER ACCESS: ASL interpreting helps deaf, DB and HH people to communicate with a wide range of hearing people: including students in mainstream schools, deaf schools or universities and deaf, DB and HH residents and business people in the community. ASL improves the quality of family communication for hearing people with deaf, DB or HH family members. ASL is also used by hearing children of deaf/DB/HH parents, hearing siblings and hearing relatives, hearing adults who are becoming deaf/DB/HH and learning ASL from other deaf individuals, and a growing population of hearing second-language students learning ASL in their school classrooms. ASL provides full equal access to everyday communication for all in the public, employment and the human and mental health services.

BETTER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: A career path opens to bilingual hearing professionals is interpretation. Demand for ASL interpreters is on the rise: great need to increase the availability of qualified ASL interpreters in the community and mainstream programs in schools and colleges/universities. ASL interpreters are in demand include hospitals, courts, governmental agencies, community services, human and mental health services, local, county and state legislatures.

POWERFUL BENEFITS: ASL helps to 1) create a stronger bond between parents and children, 2) improve spatial reasoning, 3) enhance ability to interpret body language, 4) get a better reaction times and peripheral vision, and 5) have a long-term cognitive benefit of learning sig language.

STRONG BRIDGE: ASL promotes a strong bridge between the hearing population and the deaf, DB and HH population. ASL is not universal as deaf, DB and HH people from different countries speak different sign languages yet they could understand each other through their natural gestures.

In my professional and personal life, I was the first deaf dance-actor for Honolulu Theater for Youth (HTY) which now they continue to use ASL interpreters in their productions for deaf, DB & HH audiences. After my return in Hawaii since last July, I was invited to give an ASL song "Can You Hear Me" with 400 hearing singer-students from Punahou School & other schools including one from Maui at the Central United Church of Honoulu. It shows how important it is to have ASL for entertainments in the Culture, Arts and Human/Mental Health services.

I, as a deaf individual, support this Bill because it would give Deaf, DB and HH people FULL equal access to the everyday communication in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of supporting this Bill.

Sincerely yours and mahalo,

Fanny WT Yeh
Deaf dancer-founder-director/artist/small businesswoman
Mobile phone: 808-807-7851

CARES

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY RESEARCH EDUCATION SERVICES

HB 834
ASL
Language

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair & The Committee of HHS

to
**Senate
committee
of HHS**

The Hawaii
State
Legislature

CARES testifies in strong support. ASL is a fully developed autonomous language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary and cultural heritage. It is critically important for Hawaii to pass this act not only so people can recognize the culture behind the language but so that there can be more equity in communication access for the disabled. As the Committee Report from the House Committee on Culture, Arts & International Affairs has noted “codifying recognition of ASL would advance the public's understanding”. Defining ASL in HRS Chapter 1 is just the very first step to educating the public about disability culture.

from
**Zhizi Xiong
"Angela
Melody
Young"**

Creator
of
ADD |
Aloha
Divine
Design

To better explain what “advancing the public’s understanding” would look like, CARES will proceed to explain the ADA. The ADA is a set of federal provision for disability rights. The ADA guides covered entities within the titles to get to know disability requirements for State & local governments, businesses, nonprofits, etc. It sets the parameter for covered entities to abide by. The ADA explains, as a result of implementing disability rights appropriately, there should be a change in the public’s understanding of disabilities, and there should be more access for the disabled.

From the ADA:

Contact info:
(808) 724-0047
alohadivinedesi
gn@gmail.com

“The statute clearly contemplates that the guidelines establish a level of access – a minimum – that the standards must meet or exceed. The guidelines are not to be “minimal” in the sense that they would provide for a low level of access. To the contrary, Congress emphasized that the ADA requires a “high degree of convenient access.” The legislative history explains that the guidelines may not “reduce, weaken, narrow or set less accessibility standards than those included in existing MGRAD” and should provide greater guidance in communication accessibility for individuals with hearing and vision impairments. Id. at 139.”



CARES

The ADA also explains that if the ADA is implemented correctly, these results for the disabled would be achieved:

“The final rules should improve the overall sense of well-being of persons with disabilities, who will know that public entities and places of public accommodation are generally accessible, and who will have improved individual experiences. Some of the most frequently cited qualitative benefits of increased access are the increase in one’s personal sense of dignity that arises from increased access and the decrease in possibly humiliating incidents due to accessibility barriers. Struggling to join classmates on a stage, to use a bathroom with too little clearance, or to enter a swimming pool all negatively affect a person’s sense of independence and can lead to humiliating accidents, derisive comments, or embarrassment. These humiliations, together with feelings of being stigmatized as different or inferior from being relegated to use other, less comfortable or pleasant elements of a facility (such as a bathroom instead of a kitchen sink for rinsing a coffee mug at work), all have a negative effect on persons with disabilities.”

When the State is sensitive to its disabled citizens, access & equity is improved. This amendment to HRS Chapter 1 to define ASL as an autonomous language is an indirect approach to effectuating the provision so of the ADA’s disability rights. Although this amendment is not a disability rights policy, it does create equity for the disabled by teaching the general public that ASL is equally as valuable of a language as English or Hawaiian.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Blessings,



ANGELA MELODY YOUNG

CARES

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A DEAF, HARD OF HEARING OR DEAF BLIND PATIENT?

State of Hawaii and federal law state that discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited in a public accommodation, including health care facilities and services. Health care providers are required to provide patients who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf blind with auxiliary aids and services which includes qualified sign language interpreters for effective communication. When you need a sign language interpreter, please ask the health care provider. The health care provider should engage in good faith and is encouraged, but not obliged, to consider your preferences. Your advice about preferred sign language interpreters will help the health care provider to comply with the state and federal law. Be cooperative in the interactive process. You do not have to pay for interpreting services or find an available sign language interpreter. The health care provider must make arrangements and provide a qualified sign language interpreter. You may find concrete examples in ASL on how to request an interpreter to your health care provider on the DCAB website: <http://dcabas.com/> ("videos").

WHICH HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION?

All health care providers are required to provide an auxiliary aid or service under state and federal laws. This applies to, among others, programs and services, Medicaid or Medicare providers, physicians in private practice, clinics, hospitals, and other health care providers such as dentists, podiatrists, and psychologists or counselors, regardless of the size of the practice.

EXAMPLES OF DISCRIMINATION

- The health care provider refuses to pay sign language interpreting fees and asks you to bring your own interpreter
- The health care provider refuses to hire a qualified sign language interpreter and uses other modes of communication such as writing notes, but you cannot communicate effectively or understand him/her
- The health care provider provides an unqualified sign language interpreter
- The health care provider requests that your family member or friend interpret for you. However, this may not apply in an emergency involving imminent threat to your safety such as a tsunami is coming towards the building, and there's no available sign language interpreter



CARES

Works Cited

1. "Americans with Disabilities Act Title III Regulations." ADA.gov, www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/title-iii-regulations/.

PETER L. FRITZ

T-MOBILE IP RELAY: (808) 568-0077

THE SENATE
THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2023

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Testimony on H.B. 834 HD1

Hearing: March 20, 2023

RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee, my name is Peter Fritz. I am hard of hearing. I am testifying in support of H.B. 834 HD1.

This bill recognizes American Sign Language as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

I offer the following in support of recognition of American Sign Language (ASL) as a language:

ASL is a primary means of communication for many deaf individuals. It is their first language.

Recognizing ASL as an autonomous language acknowledges the deaf community as a linguistic and cultural minority with its own history, culture, and traditions.

Recognizing ASL as a language will increase public awareness and understanding of the deaf community and their needs.

Recognizing ASL as an autonomous language supports the rights and well-being of deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

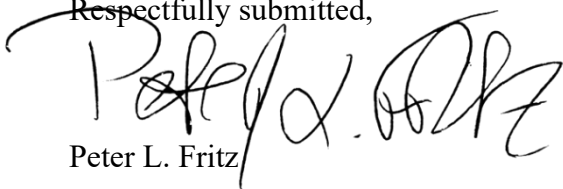
Recognizing ASL as a language recognizes the deaf community and their right to access services and information in a language they understand.

ASL is a unique and distinct language with its own history, culture, and traditions. Recognizing ASL as a language helps preserve this important aspect of American culture.

Overall, recognizing ASL a language will support the rights and well-being of deaf and hard of hearing individuals and promote a more inclusive society.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter L. Fritz". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "F".

Peter L. Fritz

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2023 8:29:51 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of HD1.

Thank you.

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2023 3:04:02 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen Laracuente	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! I support HB834 wholeheartedly because American Sign Language (ASL) was the single most important factor that contributed to my success in teaching Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Blind students. I am a retired Vice Principal from the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB). My career spans over 40 years, starting in New York City, for 9 years, and then continuing in Hawaii for another 31 years. I have tried many methodologies for teaching my students with varying degrees of hearing loss and none have been more effective than just simply using ASL to convey and explain concepts, develop critical thinking skills and help students become self-directed learners. Many students I worked with over the years came from hearing schools where they were mainstreamed, and for whatever reason they scored 2 grade levels or more behind their hearing counterparts on standardized Reading tests conducted by the State of Hawaii DOE, for example.

Using ASL over the years provided my students an opportunity to communicate clearly and overcome their obstacles to learning, including additional social, emotional and behavioral obstacles, like low self-esteem, that blocked learning from taking place. Some students arrived in my classroom with no language at all. ASL is not easy to learn as many hearing folks will attest. If it is hard for hearing folks, then imagine how much harder it is for students with hearing loss who have no first language and have not had their brains stimulated enough to become self-directed learners. Hearing folks who already have a first language generally take 4 to 7 years to develop fluency in a second spoken language. However, there is no research on how long it takes to develop a first language in students who have no language. My experience in teaching Deaf students with no language to learn ASL is that it generally takes 7 years or more to develop at least a conversational level of fluency. Then, after developing fluency in ASL, it takes another 4 to 7 years to develop basic conversational level of fluency in English. However, it is a Cognitive Academic Level of Proficiency (CALP) that is needed in both ASL and English that will enable a student with hearing loss to REALLY succeed.

The process of developing a first language in ASL and then English as a second language takes a lot of years, patience and time. This frustrates parents and the DOE that feel they need instant results. They could help by recognizing ASL as a bona fide language that can contribute to success and by supporting ASL development in the students' families and at the school level. ASL interpreters are also a great resource, even for me, when I attend any type of meeting. ASL has helped me personally to feel like I am a contributing part of the hearing community, even though I learned English as a first language and ASL second. English skills for Reading and Writing will enhance communication even further. If a student can develop

speaking, lipreading and some auditory skills through the use of a hearing aid/cochlear implant, then that will be encouraged too. However, it all starts with ASL, which leads to knowing who we are as a Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf Blind person and the feeling that it is ok and that we can be successful.

This testimony is submitted on behalf of myself, Stephen Laracuate, my wife of 38 years, Margaret Laracuate, and our Hanai daughter of 19 years, Marylou Luther. Please recongnize ASL. It's about time! Mahalo!

March 20, 2023

Submitted to the Hawaii State Senate
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura Chair
Honorable Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Re: HB 834, HD1, RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members,

I would like to fervently support HB 834, HD1, Relating to American Sign Language.

This legislation is very important to acknowledge American Sign Language (ASL) as a bonafide language equal to all spoken languages of other cultures. I first learned ASL in 1975 as a counselor for the state of Hawaii Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assigned to work with Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind people with disabilities. It took me perhaps five (5) years to converse with individuals and families using ASL. I realized that ASL is an effective way of communicating clear and effective concepts and feelings.

While American Sign Language is a visual language it has its own grammar, syntax and structure with specific use of space. Like accents of spoken languages, ASL has a Hawaiian Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind signing cultures shared by the local community with nuances specific to where individuals grew up.

I heartily support HB 834 HD1 to recognize ASL as a fully developed language which would instill pride for each person connecting with others using this language. Kindly vote to pass this important bill.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Eleanor Macdonald, M.Ed., CRC (ret.)

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2023 10:42:15 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cards Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cards Pintor

From: [ckc.cidade](#)
To: [Amelia Castro](#)
Subject: Bill HB834
Date: Saturday, March 18, 2023 1:47:15 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

March 18, 2023

Aloha, dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee,

My name is Colleen K. Cidade. I still work at HSDB for 28 years as Educational Assistant III. I am very strongly advocating to my Deaf Community as well.

I'm writing to give my full support for the Bill HB 834 HD1 relating to recognizing American Sign Language (ASL) as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Here are the reasons for my testimony as follows: (you can change, remove or modify with your own words)

I, as a deaf individual, support this Bill because it would give Deaf, DB and HH people FULL equal access to

everyday communication in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of supporting this Bill.

Sincerely yours and mahalo,

Your name (you can add your title and phone number if you wish): Teaching ASL in public schools helps to give deaf, deaf-blind (DB) and hard-of-hearing (HH) students more opportunities for interactions with hearing classmates.

Deaf and HH people

proficient in ASL may be interested in becoming ASL teachers since ASL is the third most popular foreign

language class taught in schools and universities.

BETTER AWARENESS: ASL is used by a significant large number of people in the USA, and to recognize it as an

official language would bring better understanding, greater acknowledgement and deeper respect for their linguistic

heritage. ASL promotes the validation of an identity as a human which will increase public awareness and better

understanding of Deaf, DB and HH Community and their needs to be involved in the public and education.

FOR EXAMPLE: I was learning to talk by oral til 16 years old. I found out that I am Deaf. I thought I was hearing but all my life I have struggled. I learned ASL in college - I was 21 years old

BETTER MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS: ASL promotes better awareness of and sensitivity to the Deaf, DB

and HH community. Learning ASL will develop a strong appreciation for Deaf, DB and HH culture, and can

promote understanding and acceptance of the language among others. ASL promotes cultural preservation by demonstrating a unique and distinct language with its own history, culture, and traditions as well to preserve their important aspects of Deaf Education and Human/Mental Health services.

FOR EXAMPLE: I am teaching the Deaf and Hard of Hearing children at the Deaf school. They have their hearing family who didn't know ASL and how to communicate. They are frustrated and have emotional problems.

BETTER LEARNING CAPABILITIES: ASL promotes a younger population, a better listener with more diversity and to boost the individual to become easier to learn another new language. Research has shown that using ASL actually increases a child's verbal skills. Using ASL can actually help to facilitate and encourage language development. ASL provides children with earlier access to other languages.

FOR EXAMPLE: I went to Public School from Elementary, Middle, High School as Mainstream. My communication was oral and I don't know ASL. I graduated from Kailua High School, I went to L.A. Pierce College, my education was 2nd grade level.

BETTER ACCESS: ASL interpreting helps deaf, DB and HH people to communicate with a wide range of hearing people: including students in mainstream schools, deaf schools or universities and deaf, DB and HH residents and business people in the community. ASL improves the quality of family communication for hearing people with deaf, DB or HH family members. ASL is also used by hearing children of deaf/DB/HH parents, hearing siblings and hearing relatives, hearing adults who are becoming deaf/DB/HH and learning ASL from other deaf individuals, and a growing population of hearing second-language students learning ASL in their school classrooms. ASL provides full equal access to everyday communication for all in the public, employment and the human and mental health services.

FOR EXAMPLE: I go to dr appointments, or go to hearing court, or go to counselor and go to deal with cars. They don't provide me with an ASL interpreter and don't want my family or friends and even my young son who knows ASL. It is not professional. I need better access to get my ASL Interpreter for myself to easily communicate.

BETTER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: A career path opens to bilingual hearing professionals is interpretation.

Demand for ASL interpreters is on the rise: there is a great need to increase the availability of qualified ASL interpreters in the community and mainstream programs in schools and colleges/universities. ASL interpreters are in demand include hospitals, courts, governmental agencies, community services, human and mental health services, local, county and state legislatures.

FOR EXAMPLE: I must have an ASL interpreter who can communicate with Deaf/Hard of

Hearing people, period!

POWERFUL BENEFITS: ASL helps to 1) create a stronger bond between parents and children, 2) improve spatial reasoning, 3) enhance ability to interpret body language, 4) get a better reaction times and peripheral vision, and 5) have a long-term cognitive benefit of learning sign language.

FOR EXAMPLE: We are Deaf and can teach ASL class for hearing parents/family who want to learn to communicate with Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

STRONG BRIDGE: ASL promotes a strong bridge between the hearing population and the deaf, DB and HH population. ASL is not universal as deaf, DB and HH people from different countries speak different sign languages yet they could understand each other through their natural gestures.

FOR EXAMPLE: Hearing family members and Deaf family members are teamwork, we are a strong communicator one way or another.

I, as a deaf individual, support this Bill because it would give Deaf, DB and HH people FULL equal access to everyday communication in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of supporting this Bill.

Sincerely yours and mahalo, I, as a deaf individual, support this Bill because it would give Deaf, DB and HH people FULL equal access to everyday communication in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of supporting this Bill.

Sincerely yours and mahalo,
Colleen K. Cidade
Deaf Advocator
Honolulu, Hawaii 96826

LATE

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/19/2023 6:42:12 PM
Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2023 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eileen Chiwa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Eileen Chiwa and I am Deaf. I frequently use American Sign Language, known as "ASL" to communicate with the Deaf as well as with the Deaf Community. Therefore, I support ASL as the official language.

ASL is very essential since the Deaf Community can communicate and understand each other. Every foreign language (English, Japanese, Spanish, French, etc.) has its own, like how it is spoken and written and is used by people who can hear; but ASL has its own visual language, using just hand signs, facial expressions and body movements. And it is widely used by the Deaf as well as the Deaf Community. It is even used by some people who can hear but are stroke victims.

Please support American Sign Language as an official language. Thank you very much for your attention to my testimony.

Aloha, dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee.

My name is Jeff R. Lambrecht. I am deaf. I am the Retired Postal clerk.

I'm writing to give my full support for the Bill HB 834 HD1 relating to recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Here are the reasons for my testimony as follows: I want to see State should use to communicate and it is important for our 1st language.

BETTER INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION: Teaching ASL in public schools helps to give deaf, deaf-blind (DB) and hard-of-hearing (HH) students more opportunities for interactions with hearing classmates. Deaf and HH people proficient in ASL may be interested in becoming ASL teachers since ASL is the third most popular foreign language class taught in schools and universities.

BETTER AWARENESS: ASL is used by a significant large number of people in the USA, and to recognize it as an official language would bring better understanding, greater acknowledge and deeper respect for their linguistic heritage. ASL promotes the validation of an identity as a human which will increase public awareness and better understanding of Deaf, DB and HH Community and their needs to be involved in the public and education.

BETTER MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS: ASL promotes better awareness and sensitivity to the Deaf, DB and HH community. Learning ASL will develop a strong appreciation for Deaf, DB and HH culture, and can promote understanding and acceptance of the language among others. ASL promotes cultural preservation by demonstrating a unique and distinct language with its own history, culture, and traditions as well to preserve their important aspect of Deaf Education and Human/Mental Health services.

BETTER LEARNING CAPABILITIES: ASL promotes younger population a better listener with more diverse and to boost the individual to become easier to learn another new language. Research has shown that using ASL actually increases a child's verbal skills. Using ASL can actually help to facilitate and encourage language development. ASL provides children with earlier access to other languages.

BETTER ACCESS: ASL interpreting helps deaf, DB and HH people to communicate with a wide range of hearing people: including students in mainstream schools, deaf schools or universities and deaf, DB and HH residents and business people in the community. ASL improves the quality of family communication for hearing people with deaf, DB or HH family members. ASL is also used by hearing children of deaf/DB/HH parents, hearing siblings and hearing relatives, hearing adults who are becoming deaf/DB/HH and learning ASL from other deaf individuals, and a growing population of hearing second-language students learning ASL in their school classrooms. ASL provides full equal access to everyday communication for all in the public, employment and the human and mental health services.

BETTER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: A career path opens to bilingual hearing professionals is interpretation. Demand for ASL interpreters is on the rise: great need to increase the availability of qualified ASL interpreters in the community and mainstream programs in schools and colleges/universities. ASL interpreters are in demand include hospitals, courts, governmental agencies, community services, human and mental health services, local, county and state legislatures.

POWERFUL BENEFITS: ASL helps to 1) create a stronger bond between parents and children, 2) improve spatial reasoning, 3) enhance ability to interpret body language, 4) get a better reaction times and peripheral vision, and 5) have a long-term cognitive benefit of learning sig language.

STRONG BRIDGE: ASL promotes a strong bridge between the hearing population and the deaf, DB and HH population. ASL is not universal as deaf, DB and HH people from different countries speak different sign languages yet they could understand each other through their natural gestures.

I, as a deaf individual, support this Bill because it would give Deaf, DB and HH people FULL equal access to the everyday communication in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of supporting this Bill.

Sincerely yours and mahalo,

Jeff R. Lambrecht
Deaf representative of Deaf community

Honolulu, March 18, 2023

Aloha, dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee.

My name is Linda Y. Lambrecht. I am totally deaf. I am the retired ASL teacher and HSL keeper.

I'm writing to give my full support for the Bill HB 834 HD1 relating to recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Here are the reasons for my testimony as follows: I want to see all school and community college in ASL classes. I want all the islands to learn new languages to community with deaf people.

BETTER INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION: Teaching ASL in public schools helps to give deaf, deaf-blind (DB) and hard-of-hearing (HH) students more opportunities for interactions with hearing classmates. Deaf and HH people proficient in ASL may be interested in becoming ASL teachers since ASL is the third most popular foreign language class taught in schools and universities.

BETTER AWARENESS: ASL is used by a significant large number of people in the USA, and to recognize it as an official language would bring better understanding, greater acknowledge and deeper respect for their linguistic heritage. ASL promotes the validation of an identity as a human which will increase public awareness and better understanding of Deaf, DB and HH Community and their needs to be involved in the public and education.

BETTER MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS: ASL promotes better awareness and sensitivity to the Deaf, DB and HH community. Learning ASL will develop a strong appreciation for Deaf, DB and HH culture, and can promote understanding and acceptance of the language among others. ASL promotes cultural preservation by demonstrating a unique and distinct language with its own history, culture, and traditions as well to preserve their important aspect of Deaf Education and Human/Mental Health services.

BETTER LEARNING CAPABILITIES: ASL promotes younger population a better listener with more diverse and to boost the individual to become easier to learn another new language. Research has shown that using ASL actually increases a child's verbal skills. Using ASL can actually help to facilitate and encourage language development. ASL provides children with earlier access to other languages.

BETTER ACCESS: ASL interpreting helps deaf, DB and HH people to communicate with a wide range of hearing people: including students in mainstream schools, deaf schools or universities and deaf, DB and HH residents and business people in the community. ASL improves the quality of family communication for hearing people with deaf, DB or HH family members. ASL is also used by hearing children of deaf/DB/HH parents, hearing siblings and hearing relatives, hearing adults who are becoming deaf/DB/HH and learning ASL from other deaf individuals, and a growing population of hearing second-language students learning ASL in their school classrooms. ASL provides full equal access to everyday communication for all in the public, employment and the human and mental health services.

BETTER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: A career path opens to bilingual hearing professionals is interpretation. Demand for ASL interpreters is on the rise: great need to increase the availability of qualified ASL interpreters in the community and mainstream programs in schools and colleges/universities. ASL interpreters are in demand include hospitals, courts, governmental agencies, community services, human and mental health services, local, county and state legislatures.

POWERFUL BENEFITS: ASL helps to 1) create a stronger bond between parents and children, 2) improve spatial reasoning, 3) enhance ability to interpret body language, 4) get a better reaction times and peripheral vision, and 5) have a long-term cognitive benefit of learning sig language.

STRONG BRIDGE: ASL promotes a strong bridge between the hearing population and the deaf, DB and HH population. ASL is not universal as deaf, DB and HH people from different countries speak different sign languages yet they could understand each other through their natural gestures.

I, as a deaf individual, support this Bill because it would give Deaf, DB and HH people FULL equal access to the everyday communication in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of supporting this Bill.

Sincerely yours and mahalo,

Linda Y. Lambrecht
Deaf Rep of Deaf Community
Voice phone 808 791-3722

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/20/2023 7:33:04 AM
Testimony for HHS on 3/20/2023 1:00:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristine Pagano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill to add a new section to Chapter 1 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes which would recognize American Sign Language (ASL). ASL originated in the early 19th century, a natural and visual language that has its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary and cultural heritage that is communicated daily in education, news, and events. ASL has gained academic recognition through Gallaudet University and schools for the deaf that are mandated placement under laws and worldwide recognition through television shows and movies with Deaf actors breaking barriers. Hawaii can break barriers by adding a new section for American Sign Language. The achievement of a new section to Chapter 1 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes that would recognize ASL increases employment opportunities for persons who utilize and communicate in ASL, increases the development and availability of ASL courses for credit, and provides a solid language base for deaf children to develop their cognitive and academic education for the full integration, independence and quality of life in society. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.