

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 2130

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 04 2016

RE: S.B. No. 2981  
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Twenty-Eighth State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2016  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Education, to which was referred S.B. No. 2981 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to recognize American Sign Language as a foreign language and allow public school students who pass courses in American Sign Language to receive credit toward foreign language graduation requirements.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Hawaii Disability Rights Center; Disability and Communication Access Board; Maui Deaf Friends; Isle Interpret, LLC; and thirty-four individuals. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Education.

Your Committee finds that American Sign Language is a vital part of the linguistic heritage of the State. Familiarity and proficiency in American Sign Language benefits hearing impaired and non-impaired individuals by allowing easier, more efficient communication and exchange of ideas. Additionally, research indicates that individuals with disabilities other than hearing impairment learn and gain proficiency in American Sign Language more quickly than in other languages such as Chinese or Spanish.

Your Committee further finds that, although American Sign Language is commonly used within English-dominant communities, its grammar and word order are different from English. By any

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measure, American Sign Language is a distinct language and its study should fulfill any foreign language graduation requirements in Hawaii's public schools. Your Committee also finds that the Department of Education uses the term "world language" to refer to courses in languages other than English.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Changing the description of American Sign Language from a "foreign language" to "world language"; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Education that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2981, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2981, S.D. 1, and be placed on the calendar for Third Reading.

Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Education,



MICHELLE N. KIDANI, Chair



