

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

632

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 04 2021

RE: S.B. No. 537

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-First State Legislature
Regular Session of 2021
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred S.B. No. 537 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to recognize American Sign Language as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission, Disability and Communication Access Board, Deaf and Blind Task Force, Maui Deaf Friends, and six individuals.

Your Committee finds that American Sign Language (ASL) is the primary language of many persons who are deaf or hard of hearing in the United States, including residents of Hawaii. Your Committee further finds that, although ASL is a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage, it was erroneously viewed for many years as a pantomime and a poor substitute for spoken speech. Your Committee additionally finds that recognizing ASL as a language will create more equitable access in numerous areas, including employment, public awareness, and civic participation.



As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Judiciary that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 537 and recommends that it pass Third Reading.

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



KARL RHOADS, Chair



