

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 1276-22

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 23 , 2022

RE: S.B. No. 2459
S.D. 1
H.D. 1

Honorable Scott K. Saiki
Speaker, House of Representatives
Thirty-First State Legislature
Regular Session of 2022
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Health, Human Services, & Homelessness, to which was referred S.B. No. 2459, S.D. 1, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Office of Language Access to submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature regarding compliance with state and federal language access laws; and
- (2) Appropriate funds to establish Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator positions in the Departments of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Health, and Agriculture, and in the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Department of Human Services, Office of Community Services, Common Cause Hawaii, Catholic Charities Hawai'i, The Legal Clinic, Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights, Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights, Refugee Advocacy Lab, and

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three individuals. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Budget and Finance, Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency, and Office of Language Access.

Your Committee finds that one out of every nine persons living in Hawaii is limited English proficient, which limits their ability to access important benefits and services and obtain essential information during public health emergencies, pandemics, or natural disasters. Your Committee further finds that while the Office of Language Access was created in 2006 to address the barriers created by limited proficiency in English, the Office is only authorized to eliminate the language barrier through informal means. This measure strengthens the Office of Language Access' ability to ensure compliance with state and federal language access laws by requiring the Office to submit an annual report, which will provide the Governor and Legislature with timely information that is crucial in improving the State's efforts to enhance and promote language access.


Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Appropriating an unspecified sum to establish three Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator positions in the Office of Language Access to work with all state departments and agencies, rather than establishing separate coordinator positions in the Departments of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Health, and Agriculture, and the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 2060, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Health, Human Services, & Homelessness that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of S.B. No. 2459, S.D. 1, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as S.B. No. 2459, S.D. 1, H.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Finance.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Health, Human
Services, & Homelessness,



RYAN P. YAMANE, Chair



