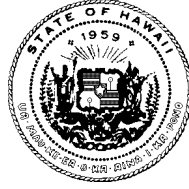


DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

April 11, 2022

TO: The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SCR 1 SD1 – URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM TO RECRUIT AND EMPLOY QUALIFIED BLIND PERSONS TO SERVE AS ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY INSTRUCTORS AND IN OTHER POSITIONS AS TEACHERS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS.**

Hearing: April 14, 2022, 2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of the proposed resolution as it supports expanded educational and employment opportunities for individuals with visual impairments. The Department defers to the Department of Education.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the resolution is to encourage the Department of Education (DOE) to develop and implement an affirmative action program, to the extent permitted by law, designed to recruit and employ qualified blind professionals to serve as orientation and mobility instructors, and in other positions as teachers of visually impaired students. The SD1 made technical amendments.

Ho`opono Services for the Blind, a branch of the DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), offers a nationally accredited adult residential blindness skills training program staffed by a team of professionals, many of whom are blind themselves. DVR's staff, certified by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB), are highly effective

teachers and role models for DOE co-enrolled transition-age (high school) students and adult participants in the Ho`opono Services for the Blind, New Visions Program. The program places individuals who are blind and visually impaired in competitive, integrated employment nationwide as NBPCB certified instructors in areas such as orientation and mobility, home management, Braille, and other areas of rehabilitation teaching for the blind.

Ho`opono Services for the Blind has received calls from parents of DOE students who are blind and visually impaired inquiring about the possibility of their children being provided blindness skills training from DVR's NBPCB-certified instructors. However, these students remain under the jurisdiction of the DOE.

The Department welcomes opportunities to collaborate with the DOE to develop a pathway for DVR-trained and qualified applicants to fill DOE positions who can provide blindness skills training and support to DOE students.

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) • Fax (808) 586-8129

April 14, 2022

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senate Concurrent Resolution 1, Senate Draft 1 – Urging the Department of Education to Develop and Implement a Program to Recruit and Employ Qualified Blind Persons to Serve as Orientation and Mobility Instructors, and in other Positions, as Teachers of Visually Impaired Students.

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Concurrent Resolution 1, Senate Draft 1. If the Department of Education adopts this practice, not only would it affirm an employment first philosophy, but it would provide a powerful example to the affected students with disabilities by letting them know that their disability need not be a barrier when it comes to employment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kirby L. Shaw".

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

SCR-1-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/12/2022 12:05:17 PM

Testimony for EDN on 4/14/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stan Young	Hawaii State committee of Blind Vendors	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Stan Young, Chairperson, Hawaii State Committee of Blind Vendors

Before the Committee on Education (EDN)

Hawaii State House of Representatives

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am Stan Young, supporting SCR1 S.D. 1.

This resolution supports the fact that qualified blind people can teach blind students. It is obvious and clear to me, as a low vision, blind person, that students who have low vision or are blind can gain tremendously in education, in confidence, and in overall competency by having qualified blind or visually impaired instructors. It should be clear to all that these instructors can provide support in the areas of low vision and blindness that will enhance the education, learning, and attitude of blind people that will result in positive educational outcomes;.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF HAWAII

Testimony before the Committee on Education (EDN)

Hawaii State House of Representatives

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D.1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am James Gashel, representing the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, testifying to support SCR1 S.D. 1.

SCR1 urges the Department of Education to “develop and implement a program to recruit and employ qualified blind persons to serve as orientation and mobility instructors, and in other positions, as teachers of visually impaired students.” The point of this resolution is to emphasize the importance of having teachers who can serve as role models. That it’s good to have blind adult role models for young blind students should be obvious.

Who better to teach a blind person to go safely from point A to point B than someone who does this all the time as a blind person? Who better to teach reading and writing in Braille than teachers who read Braille with their fingers, not with their eyes? The legislature already understands the advantages blind teachers can bring to blind students.

In March this committee passed HCR13, essentially the same as SCR1 S.D.1. The report HSCR168-22, which I quote below accurately explains this resolution’s importance:

“Your Committee finds that the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) is a credentialing process administered by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board and includes training in teaching Structured Discovery Cane Travel, which has empowered blind children and adults across the United States. Your Committee further finds that the Department of Education has not employed NOMC credentialed professionals to teach matters of orientation and mobility to blind students. Your Committee believes that an affirmative action program to recruit and employ qualified blind professionals can be effective in educating students with disabilities and serve as a powerful example for these students by letting them know that their disability need not be a barrier for employment.”

The blind adult training program, called “New Visions,” operated by the Ho’opono Services for the Blind branch of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in the Department of Human Services, is and has been a certified structured discovery training center for many years. As such, Ho’opono employs certified NOMC blind orientation and mobility instructors. This resolution, urging DOE to employ certified blind instructors, would harmonize and better align the state’s mobility training services for children and youth with its very successful adult training program.

Members of the NFB of Hawaii are blind people. We stand ready and willing to work with the Department of Education to implement this resolution. Mahalo for your support.

SCR-1-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/12/2022 12:46:17 PM

Testimony for EDN on 4/14/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Clifford Miyashiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am currently a student with Hoopono Visions program and fully support this bill,

thank you for supporting the blind community for highly skilled blind educators with the importance

of structural discovery training "Blind teaching the Blind" meaning they are teaching from actual living experiences and techniques.

Brandon G. Young

Testimony of Brandon Young

Before the Committee on Education (EDN)

Hawaii State House of Representatives

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon, Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am Brandon Young, supporting SCR1 S.D. 1.

I am a blind person and a resident of the island of Oahu. I want to thank you and your committee for taking the time to hear our resolution at this time. This resolution is very important to the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii. This resolution, if passed, would support the hiring of blind instructors in the Department of Education (DOE). As of date, the DOE, has hired no blind instructors to teach in the field of Orientation and Mobility. I believe that the most qualified person to teach a blind person how to travel safely is another blind person. As blind people, we use our long white canes and navigate the streets of Oahu on a daily basis. The Department of Education does not currently believe that blind people are qualified or capable to teach here in this state. This needs to change. This resolution would help to change this matter. I would urge that your committee pass this resolution and help to get more qualified blind people as teachers in our wonderful state. I want to thank you for your time in hearing this resolution, and would again urge that it be passed.

Testimony of Donald Sakamoto Before the Committee on Education (EDN) Hawaii State House of Representatives Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022 April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am Donald Sakamoto, fully supporting SCR1 S.D. 1.

This resolution, mainly supports the fact that qualified blind people can teach blind students and have advantages in serving as role models. What better way to have blind adult role models who have learned the true aspects to teach other blind people how to roam and travel safely from any destination as well as the skills in reading and writing in Braille for those teachers who would read Braille with their fingers instead of those teachers that would use with their eyes.

This resolution supports the fact that qualified blind people are able to teach blind students and to be good role models. In fact, when I attended Ho'opono State agency for the Blind in 2011 as a student, I had the privilege to be taught by other blind teachers who was able to teach me and many others while being sleep shaded in such skills as cooking, computer, mobility, and reading and writing in Braille. When I finally graduated, I was able to live a productive life as an independent blind person and to educate other blind people about the benefits and skills that I learned from other blind teachers at Ho'opono.

The time is now to prepare to have resolution SCR1 to precede on in having qualified blind teachers to educate other blind people especially, our children and youth. Famous "by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail" by Benjamin Franklin.

Mahalo and I urge you all to pass this resolution to allow the state agencies to employ more blind certified people to teach other children, youths, and others the vital skills they need to be independent and successful in their lives.

SCR-1-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/13/2022 11:02:20 AM

Testimony for EDN on 4/14/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stacie Fong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Stacie Fong

Before the Committee on Education (EDN)

Hawaii State House of Representatives

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am (insert your name here), supporting SCR1 S.D. 1.

I'm a parent of a blind 3rd grade at Waikiki Elementary and we definitely need more teachers. Who better to teach her than someone who uses those skills daily themselves. Please help us support this bill! It's so important to my daughter's education! Thank you!

SCR-1-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/13/2022 11:56:01 AM

Testimony for EDN on 4/14/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Lemke	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Dear Committee chair, vice chair, and members,

I am Ann Lemke and I wish to express my full support for SCR1, which recognizes the compelling strength and benefit of providing blind children and adolescents instruction by qualified blind teachers and related education professionals. As a retired senior adult who happens to be blind myself, I can tell you how I longed to have blind role models when I was growing up. While I respected the good intentions and skills of sighted adults, in my heart I felt they could never truly understand how to help me aim high in life and then share my learning process. By denying blind youth access to competent blind instructors, the DOE has perhaps unintentionally sending the message that blind folks can't help, motivate, understand, nor instruct other blind people. Please pass this resolution to go on record with your support for our community.

Testimony of Leni Ebusutani
Before the Committee on Education (EDN)
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am Leni Ebusutani, supporting SCR1 S.D. 1.

This resolution supports the fact that qualified blind people can teach blind students and have advantages in serving as role models. Who better to teach a blind person to go safely from one place to another than someone who does this all the time as a blind person? Who better to teach reading and writing in Braille than teachers who read Braille with their fingers, not with their eyes? The legislature knows the answers.

Similar resolutions passed the Senate and the House last year, but the concurrent resolution was not considered. SCR1 is the same as HCR13 which passed this committee in March. Therefore, I urge you to approve this concurrent resolution as well.

SCR1 is strongly supported by the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii (NFB of Hawaii). Members of the NFB of Hawaii are blind people. We stand ready and willing to work with the Department of Education to implement this resolution, hoping the concurrent resolution crosses the finish line this year. Mahalo for your support.

Testimony of Jaclyn Leilani Borsa
Before the Committee on Education (EDN)
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am Jaclyn Leilani Borsa, supporting SCR1 S.D. 1.

This resolution supports the fact that qualified blind people can teach blind students and have advantages in serving as role models. That it's good to have blind adult role models for young blind students should be obvious. Who better to teach a blind person to go safely from point A to point B than someone who does this all the time as a blind person? Who better to teach reading and writing in Braille than teachers who read Braille with their fingers, not with their eyes? This resolution recognizes the advantages of having blind teachers to teach these skills unique to blindness.

I would greatly appreciate your support on this bill.

Mahalo.

Testimony of Hoku Burrows Before the Committee on Education (EDN)
Hawaii State House of Representatives Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am Hoku burrows, a blind woman and member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i, supporting SCR1 S.D. 1.

I am an excellent example and product of experience from benefits I have gained with qualified blind people teaching me, a blind individual and the advantage of blind instructors and mentors as my role models. it has been and continues to be life changing.

Of the young blind students I spend time with, the parents comment on the obvious difference it makes in their child's life to have a blind teacher and mentor. Many parents say it is just common sense to have a blind instructor for their child, being an example teaching skills and giving hope for their future. Having blind adult role models for young blind students is an obvious choice.

I stand in full support of the testimony submitted by James Gashel for the NFB of Hawai'i.

Please help blind students and blind teachers by working to pass the concurrent resolution this year. Mahalo nui loa for your support.

Testimony of Virgil Stinnett
Before the Committee on Education (EDN)
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am virgil Stinnett a blind businessman and elected president of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i, supporting SCR1 S.D. 1.

I am a successful blind entrepreneur and world traveler today because of excellent training by blind NOMC certified instructors. At one time I undertook the education to become a certified NOMC instructor to use toward the enrichment of blind students. During my 5 years of NOMC certification, a number of young students lives were impacted with positive results with my instruction and example as a blind man. Unfortunately I was not able to make the same impact on our young DOE students, unless they participated in summer programs offered at DHS Ho'opono. The summer programs are a very limited exposure for young students and yet they are not eligible until they are at least 14 years old. By then a lot of time lost has gone by in their daily and early learning. A summer program is not enough time in their young lives to give them the full benefit of their K=12 years exposure to qualified blind instructors in their daily education of essential blind tools for their success later in life as a contributing working adult.

The legislature understands the advantages blind teachers can bring to blind students. Resolutions with an identical purpose passed the Senate and the House last year, but the clock ran out on the concurrent resolutions in both bodies.

Please help blind students and blind teachers by working to pass the concurrent resolution this year. Members of the NFB of Hawaii are blind people. We stand ready and willing to work with the Department of Education to implement these resolutions, hoping the concurrent versions cross the finish line this year.

Mahalo and Aloha for listening to our testimony and for your support.

Testimony of Katie Keim Before the Committee on Education (EDN)
Hawaii State House of Representatives Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members.

My name is Katie Keim, a blind business woman and member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i, in full support of SCR1 S.D. 1. I stand in full support of the testimony submitted by James Gashel for the NFB of Hawai'i.

Today I once again have a successful career for the 25 years of my 27 years of blindness, full time work using braille daily, travel independently using my long white cane, when I want, where I want, with confidence, and no hesitation, due to the excellent instruction I received from qualified teachers who are blind along with their excellent example and mentoring. It inspired me toward a lifetime commitment to ensure the same quality opportunity for other blind people regardless of their age, especially our blind children.

Early in my career as a qualified blind instructor, I worked in a limited capacity as an independent consultant for DOE and then full time for 11 years in DHS, with the success of a number of young students' lives being changed by my instruction and example. At the time I became a DHS employee, I was able to make strides in our work during summer programs with our youth in DOE, but not those younger than 14, during some of the most critical child's development and learning years with daily habits being developed. Many of my qualified blind colleagues have the required education and NOMC certification needed to be instructors in DOE, yet those who have tried to apply have yet to even be acknowledged, whether the lack of an accessible application submission process, or often due to their NOMC certification.

The legislation recognizes in CR6_SSCR1368, thirty-first legislature, regular session of 2021) the need, yet time ran out for the concurrent session and vote.

We are hoping for your support to move these resolutions forward and complete the process for the benefit of our blind DOE children, and give employment opportunity to qualified blind NOMC instructors who have invested their time and energy in their education to achieve their own dream of structured discovery teaching to our blind children so they too can learn to aspire and ultimately achieve their own dreams in the future.

Members of the NFB of Hawaii are blind people. We stand ready and willing to work with the Department of Education to implement these resolutions.

Mahalo nui loa for your serious consideration and support in moving the concurrent versions to their completion this year.

Testimony of Lenora Springer
Before the Committee on Education (EDN)
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
April 14, 2022, 2:00 PM, hearing on SCR1 S.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair Woodson, Vice Chair Kapela, and members. I am Lenora Springer, supporting SCR1 S.D. 1.

I would like the Hawaii state Department of Education to hire teachers who are blind and/or are visually impaired to teach and help students who are blind and/or are visually impaired.

I am a retired Hawaii DOE teacher and know that experience in the field that is taught helps the students more effectively.

SCR1 is strongly supported by members of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, who are ready and willing to work with the Department of Education to implement this resolution. Mahalo for your support.
Lenora Springer

SCR-1-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/13/2022 5:13:31 PM

Testimony for EDN on 4/14/2022 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tabatha Mitchell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My daughter is a blind student at Kalaheo High School on Oahu. She wants to be a Biochemist when she grows up. That means she needs the skills and the tools to level the playing with her sighted peers. Emerie was likely born blind although she was not diagnosed until she was 3. She has received training from sighted and blind instructors in Braille, technology tools, and Orientation & Mobility. The instructors that she worked with that were blind have by far been her most valuable and most capable instructors. America is missing out on a tremendously talented group of people when they do not employ blind citizens for the same jobs as sighted citizens. I am a mother to 5 kids. Eme is the only one that is blind. Eme is just as capable of doing chores, schoolwork, and engaging in recreational activities as her sighted siblings. Granted, Eme may need some accommodations, but so would someone if they were missing an arm. She simply accomplishes the same tasks differently than someone with eye sight, just as someone with one arm would accomplish tasks differently than someone with two arms. I urge you to support this legislation to rightfully employ blind individuals within the state of Hawaii. There is no better person to teach non-visual skills than a blind person that uses those non-visual skills every single day. If you need convincing, think about teaching a blind kid geometry. Who could teach it better to a blind kid, a person that depends on their sight to teach concepts visually, or a certified math teacher that is blind that can fully explain geometrical concepts in a non-visual manner?