

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

1316

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 23 2023

RE: H.B. No. 834
H.D. 1
S.D. 1

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2023
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Health and Human Services, to which was referred H.B. No. 834, H.D. 1, 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 Department of Human Services, Disability and Communication Access Board, Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission, Hawaii Disability Rights Center, Aloha State Association of the Deaf, and thirteen individuals.

Your Committee finds that American Sign Language (ASL) is not a mere translation of spoken English, but a complex visual-spatial language that is closely tied to the nation's culture and identity and has served as the backbone of the United States' deaf and hard-of-hearing population, including the people of Hawaii. Your Committee further finds that statutory recognition of ASL as a distinct language allows increased equitable access in numerous areas, including employment, public awareness, and civic participation. In this regard, over forty states recognize ASL in



varying degrees, with at least a dozen states enacting laws to acknowledge ASL as its own distinct language. This measure, by codifying the recognition of ASL as a distinct language, advances and promotes the public's understanding and acknowledgment of ASL as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own distinct grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Making it effective upon its approval; 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 Health and Human Services that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 834, H.D. 1, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 834, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Judiciary.

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



JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, Chair



