

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

1368

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 24 2023

RE: H.B. No. 933
H.D. 2
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 Commerce and Consumer Protection, to which was referred H.B. No. 933, H.D. 2, entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PRINT DISABILITIES,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of this measure is to appropriate funds and require the Public Utilities Commission to use moneys in the Universal Service Fund to provide free telecommunications access to certain information for individuals with a print disability.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Disability and Communication Access Board, Hawaii State Committee of Blind Vendors, National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, National Organization of Parents of Blind Children - Hawaii, and seven individuals. Your Committee received comments on this measure from the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Department of Human Services, Public Utilities Commission, and Hawaiian Telcom.

Your Committee finds that the lack of timely access to information can be a daily problem for several thousand residents in the State who cannot see or use standard print as their primary form of communication. These residents are at an information



deficit in keeping up with current events or opportunities that may benefit them. Accessible formats provide information in an alternative manner or form that gives persons with print disabilities access to information that is equivalent to access for a person without a disability. Accessible formats include: a free telephone service that offers state and local government information, including public notices, and other important information such as daily newspapers, magazines, emergency alerts, job opportunities, and other timely content; and the conversion of printed information into an audio format, Braille, or both. This measure will ensure that persons with print disabilities have greater access to information in alternative, accessible formats.

Your Committee acknowledges the concerns raised in testimony that the Universal Service Fund has never been active and currently has no funds. Your Committee further acknowledges the concerns raised in testimony that the Public Utilities Commission does not have explicit or specific authorization to expend funds for the Universal Service Fund program as part of its budget ceiling. As such, funding for free telecommunications access to certain information for individuals with a print disability must instead come from the State's general funds. Therefore, amendments to this measure are necessary to address these concerns.

Accordingly, your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Deleting language that would have required the Public Utilities Commission to use funds from the Universal Service Fund to provide the services required by this measure;
- (2) Amending section 1 to reflect its amended purpose; and
- (3) 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 Commerce and Consumer Protection that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 933, H.D. 2, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B.



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No. 933, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Ways and Means.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Commerce and
Consumer Protection,



JARRETT KEOHOKALOLE, Chair



