



HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

KOMIKINA PONO KĪWILA O HAWAI‘I

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411 HONOLULU, HI 96813 • PHONE: 586-8636 • FAX: 586-8655 • TDD: 568-8692

Wednesday, February 22, 2023
Rm. 329, 2:00 p.m.

To: The Honorable Mark M. Nakashima Chair
The Honorable Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

From: Liann Ebesugawa, Chair
and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: H.B. No. 834, H.D.1

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

H.B. No. 834 , H.D.1, would add a new section to Chapter 1 of the Hawai‘i Revised Statutes which would recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary and cultural heritage. Just as is the case with languages that are characteristic of ancestry or national origin, ASL is a language that is closely tied to culture and identity.

Over 40 U.S. states recognize ASL to varying degrees, from a foreign language for school credits to the official language of that state's deaf population, with several enacting legislation similar to H.B. No. 834, H.D.1.

It is important to recognize that ASL is a distinct language and not just translated English, but a language with its own culture and identity. **The HCRC supports H.B. No. 834, H.D.1.**

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 9:40:19 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/22/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ed Chevy	Aloha State Association of the Deaf	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha! My name is Ed Chevy. I am Deaf citizen of the United States of America. I wholeheartedly support HB834 (Relating to ASL). I would like to testify in ASL with a sign language interpreter to explain why ASL is extremely important for the Hawaii Deaf Americans. Please help ASL to be recognized as a language. This is the 21st century. America is going to be a different country. We learn, we change, we move on together in harmony.

Mahalo Nui,

E!

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/17/2023 8:47:05 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/22/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We are in support.



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
1010 Richards Street Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: 586-8126 Fax: 586-8129
email: spin@doh.hawaii.gov
February 22, 2023

Special Education
Advisory Council

Ms. Martha Guinan, Chair
Ms. Susan Wood, Vice Chair

Ms. Sara Alimoot
Ms. Virginia Beringer
Ms. Mary Brogan
Mr. Rick Bunny
Ms. Deborah Cheeseman
Ms. Annette Cooper
Ms. Shana Cruz
Mr. Mark Disher
Dr. Lisa Garcia
Ms. Mai Hall
Ms. Melissa Harper Osai
Mr. Kerry Iwashita
Ms. Melissa Johnson
Ms. Tina King
Ms. Jennifer Leoiki-Drino
Ms. Cheryl Matthews
Dr. Paul Meng
Ms. Kiele Pennington
Ms. Carrie Pisciotto
Ms. Kau'i Rezentes
Ms. Rosie Rowe
Ms. Ivalee Sinclair
Mr. Steven Vannatta
Ms. Lisa Vegas
Ms. Paula Whitaker
Ms. Jasmine Williams
Ms. Susan Wood

Ms. Roxanne Rokero, liaison to
the Superintendent
Ms. Wendy Nakasone-Kalani,
liaison to the military
community

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff

Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 834 HD 1 – Relating to American Sign Language

Dear Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee,


The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State
Advisory Council under the Individual's with Disabilities Act (IDEA)
supports HB 834, HD 1 which recognizes American Sign Language
(ASL) as a fully developed, autonomous natural language with its
own grammar, syntax, vocabulary and cultural heritage.

Currently the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) serves
approximately 350 students who are Deaf, hard of hearing or Deaf/
Blind. For many of these students American Sign Language is their
first and primary language. ASL is also the primary language of
instruction at the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind, as well
as programs supporting Deaf students throughout the islands. .
Additionally, ASL is considered a World Language by the HIDOE and
provides high school seniors the opportunity to earn the Seal of
Biliteracy in ASL.

Recognizing ASL as an autonomous natural language helps to
enhance the perpetuation of Deaf Culture and support the right of
students to various services of accessibility to communicate and
receive information in a language they know and understand.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Respectfully,


Martha Guinan
Chair

Honolulu, Hawaii, February 20, 2023

Aloha, dear Rep. Mark Nakashimsa,

My name is Fanny WT Yeh. I moved to live on Oahu, Hawaii, from Paris, France since mid-July, 2022. I was born deaf in Taiwan and have lived in Brazil, the USA (Maryland, NYC & Hawaii), Indonesia & France.

I'm writing to give my full support for the Bill HB834 HD1 relating to recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Here are the reasons for my testimony as follows:

STRONG BRIDGE: ASL is the bridge for connecting us to the world of those who have an impaired hearing or a verbal ability. ASL is the native language of the Deaf Community and provides full access to everyday communication. ASL is not universal as deaf people from different countries speak different sign languages yet they could understand each other through their natural gestures.

BETTER ACCESS: ASL interpreting helps deaf and hard-of-hearing (HH) people to communicate. Being proficient in ASL allows you to communicate with a wide range of hearing, HH and deaf people - including students in mainstream and deaf schools or universities and deaf or HH residents and business people in the community. ASL improves the quality of family communication for hearing people with deaf or HH family members. ASL is also used by hearing children of deaf parents, hearing siblings and relatives of the deaf, hearing adults who are becoming deaf and learning ASL from other deaf individuals, and a growing population of hearing second-language students learning ASL in their school classrooms.

BETTER CULTURE AWARENESS: ASL promotes better awareness of and sensitivity to the deaf and HH community. Learning ASL will develop a strong appreciation for deaf culture, and can promote understanding and acceptance of the language among others.

BETTER INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION: Teaching ASL in public schools helps to give deaf and HH students more opportunities for interactions with hearing classmates. Deaf and HH people proficient in ASL may be interested in becoming ASL teachers since ASL is the third most popular foreign language class taught in schools and universities.

BETTER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES: A career path opens to bilingual hearing professionals is interpretation. Demand for ASL interpreters is on the rise: great need to increase the availability of qualified ASL interpreters in the community and mainstream programs in schools and colleges/universities. ASL interpreters are in demand include hospitals, courts, governmental agencies, community services, local, county and state legislatures.

BETTER LEARNING CAPABILITIES: ASL helps you to become a better listener, more diverse, to boost your business, and to become easier to learn another new language. Research has shown that using ASL actually increases a child's verbal skills. Using ASL can actually help to facilitate and encourage language development. ASL provides children with earlier access to other languages.

POWERFUL BENEFITS: ASL helps to 1) create a stronger bond between parents and infant, 2) improve spatial reasoning, 3) enhance ability to interpret body language, 4) get a better reaction times and peripheral vision, and 5) have a long-term cognitive benefit of learning sig language.

I, as a deaf individual, support this Bill because it would give Deaf and HH people FULL access to the everyday communication in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of supporting this Bill.

Sincerely yours and mahalo,

Fanny WT Yeh
Deaf dancer-director/artist/small business owner
Mobile phone: 808-807-7851

PETER L. FRITZ

T-MOBILE IP RELAY: (808) 568-0077

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION OF 2023

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Testimony on H.B. 834 HD1

Hearing: February 22, 2023

RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

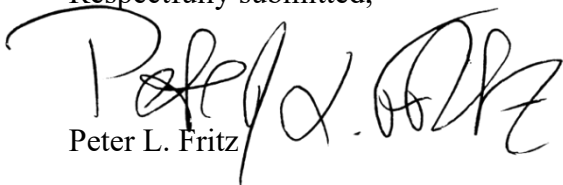
Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama and members of the Committee, my name is Peter Fritz. I am an individual with a hearing disability and I am testifying **in support** of H.B. 834 HD1. This bill recognizes American Sign Language as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

American Sign Language (ASL) is a complete and distinct language that is used by many people as their primary means of communication. Its complexity, vocabulary, and use in many different settings make it important to recognize it as a language in its own right. I offer the following reasons for my support of recognition of (ASL) as an official language:

1. **ASL Is A Primary Language: For Many People:** ASL is a primary means of communication for many deaf individuals. ASL is their first language, just as English, or any other spoken language is for those who use it.
2. **ASL Has Complex Grammar:** ASL has a complex and distinct grammar that is different from spoken languages. It has its own syntax, grammar rules, and linguistic structure, making it a unique language.
3. **ASL Has Its Own Vocabulary:** ASL has its own vocabulary and lexicon, which includes signs for abstract concepts, emotions, and everyday words. The signs are not just simple gestures, but rather are part of a complex linguistic system.
4. **Validation of a Cultural Identity:** Recognizing ASL as an official language acknowledges the deaf community as a linguistic and cultural minority, and validates their identity. ASL is a unique and distinct language with its own history, culture, and traditions. Recognizing ASL as an official language helps preserve this important aspect of American culture.
5. **Increased Awareness:** Recognizing ASL as an official language will increase public awareness and understanding of the Deaf community and their needs, and foster a more inclusive society.

Recognizing ASL as an official language can help support the rights and well-being of deaf and hard of hearing individuals and promote a more inclusive society.

Respectfully submitted,



Peter L. Fritz

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 7:53:07 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/22/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen Laracuente	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a retired Vice Principal from the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB), with over 40 years of experience in the field of education for folks with hearing loss from age 3 to 22, this testimony is in support of HB 834 for one simple reason: All humans have the right to a language that is most suitable for communicating feelings, needs, wants, thoughts and opinions. In the case of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Blind folks who have been unable, through no fault of their own, to communicate through lipreading, speech, and use of hearing aid, cochlear implant or other amplification device, American Sign Language offers the best possible chance of developing a way to understand the world and function as independent human beings.

Here is an anecdote to prove my point: Back in 1998, when I was training to become an administrator in the State of Hawaii's Department of Education, a person whose name I will not mention, who has a Ph.D, stood up to ask me a question, "I have a friend who teaches students with hearing loss. What do you think of my friend's statement that sign language is a crutch?" There was a moment of quiet tension as I responded, "My father's first language is Spanish and he doesn't speak, read or write English that well. Is that because he is using Spanish as a crutch? My mother-in-law's first language is Japanese and she doesn't speak, read or write English that well. Is she using Japanese as a crutch?" The Ph.D person sat down. I was actually using ASL interpreters that day and every day during my training, despite the fact that my skills in lipreading, speech and using a hearing aid are quite good. However, without ASL interpreters, my energy would be drained from the stress of trying to understand presenters and my fellow trainees' discussion of educational issues by myself. This would have resulted in headaches, which I experienced in my 4 year college. With ASL interpreters as an accommodation, I am allowed to sit back, relax and soak in information, like my hearing peers. Muchos mahalos for allowing me to share my perspective with you folks and please, pass HB834.

February 15, 2023

Submitted to the Hawaii State Senate
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Honorable Representative David A. Tarnas Chair
Honorable Representative Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Re: HB 834 HD1, RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Dear Chairperson Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama and Members,

I would like to enthusiastically support HB 834 HD1, Relating to American Sign Language.

This legislation is very important to acknowledge American Sign Language (ASL) as a bonafide language equal to all spoken languages of other cultures. I first learned ASL in 1975 as a counselor for the Hawaii Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assigned to work with Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind people with disabilities. It took me perhaps five (5) years to converse in ASL with individuals and families using ASL. I realized that ASL is an effective way of communicating clear and effective concepts and feelings.

While American Sign Language is a visual language it has its own grammar, syntax and structure with specific use of space. Like accents of spoken languages, ASL has a Hawaiian Deaf/hard of hearing signing culture shared by the local community with nuances specific to where individuals grew up.

I heartily support HB 834 HD1 to recognize ASL as a fully developed language which is long overdue. Kindly pass this important bill.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Eleanor Macdonald, M.Ed., CRC (ret.)
District 13

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/20/2023 11:17:21 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/22/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cards Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this bill.

Mahalo nui,

Cards Pintor

HB-834-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/21/2023 8:43:00 AM

Testimony for CPC on 2/22/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lea Dias	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

As an individual citizen, I strongly support this bill which recognizes American Sign Language as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Thank you for considering the passage of this bill which is of importance to so many of our Deaf ohana.

Lea Dias

JAN L. FRIED • American Sign Language/English Interpreter

• RID Certified-IC, CI, CT • Educator • Consultant •

21 February 2023

The House of Representatives
Thirty-Second Legislature, 2023, State of Hawai'i
Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Rep. Mark Nakashima, Chair
Rep. Jackson Sayama, Vice Chair

Hearing: 22 February 2023 at 2:00PM, Conference Room 329

Testimony in Support of HB834, HDI-Relating to American Sign Language

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and CPC Committee Members,

I am an American Sign Language/English interpreter and a professor of American Sign Language—it is without hesitation that I support the formal recognition of American Sign Language (ASL) as a complete and living language. Like *all* the other languages widely used and recognized in Hawai'i, ASL has its own grammar, vocabulary, vibrant literature, and long-standing cultural heritage. In 1965 linguistic bodies officially accepted that ASL met all the standards of a language. Hawai'i should too.

By recognizing ASL you:

- Acknowledge and validate its legion of users. According to numerous accounts, ASL is the 3rd or 4th most studied language in the US. Deaf Community members see themselves as part of a cultural and linguistic minority that has experienced historical linguistic and educational oppression nearly identical to that experienced by Kanaka Maoli who use 'Olelo Hawai'i.
- Recognize the right Deaf people have to communicate in a language that is the primary language of instruction at Schools for the Deaf (including the HI School for the Deaf and the Blind) and in programs supporting Deaf students. It is the predominant sign language used in the US, Canada and throughout the Pacific. Consistent access to information in a preferred language encourages people to participate and be included in all aspects of their lives. Representation matters.
- Add Hawai'i to the list of 45 other states that formally recognize ASL in their state laws. It is time. The HIDOE already includes ASL on its roster of World Languages and provides graduating high school seniors the opportunity to earn the Seal of Biliteracy in ASL. Additionally, the University of Hawai'i System has offered ASL since the mid-1990's as one of the languages students can study to satisfy their language requirement for their degree.

I appreciate this opportunity to encourage the committees to support HB834, HDI. Your actions will have a profound and positive impact.

Respectfully,
Jan L. Fried

Jan L. Fried, CI and CT
Nationally Certified ASL/English Interpreter

HB-834-HD-1

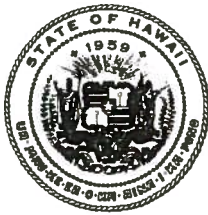
Submitted on: 2/21/2023 3:12:05 PM

Testimony for CPC on 2/22/2023 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael EKM Olderr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. I feel that normalizing the use of sign language in any context will help and promote the usage. It can only bring benefits. I believe this bill would be the first step in having a more prominent program that ends with sign language being a core curriculum in school and has abled body people widely use it to communicate with others.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • TTY (808) 586-8162 • Fax (808) 586-8129

February 22, 2023

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

House Bill 834 HD1 – Relating to American Sign Language

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 834 HD1 – Relating to American Sign Language.

American Sign Language is a complex visual-spatial language that is a linguistically complete and natural language. With signing, the brain processes linguistic information through the eyes. The shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movements, all play important parts in conveying information. American Sign Language is the backbone of American Deaf Culture.

Pursuant to the goal of increasing the number of competent sign language interpreters in the State, DCAB issues the Hawaii State Sign Language Interpreter Credential (HSSLIC) to interpreters who pass the Hawaii Quality Assurance System (HQAS) test or who possess a valid credential issued by an entity recognized by DCAB. Sign language interpreters interpret between two distinct languages – a sign language and a spoken language – by conveying equivalent and conceptually correct messages from one language to another. House Bill 834 HD 1 would recognize that American Sign Language is a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director