



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**

1177 Alakea Street, Room B-100
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
Phone: (808) 586-8730 / Fax: (808) 586-8733
doh.ola@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony COMMENTING on HCR 186/ HR191
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S OFFICE OF LANGUAGE
ACCESS TO ESTABLISH AN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER
WORKFORCE WORKING GROUP TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN
SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS IN THE STATE.**

REPRESENTATIVE DELLA AU BELATTI, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE JENNA TAKENOUCI, VICE CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date: 3/23/2023

Room Number: 329 & Videoconference

1 **Agency's Position:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) appreciates the intent of the House
2 Concurrent Resolution 186/ House Resolution 191 and offers the following comments.

3 **Purpose and Justification:** These resolutions request OLA to establish an American Sign
4 Language Interpreter Workforce Working Group to increase the number of American Sign
5 Language (ASL) interpreters in the State and to submit an interim report of its findings and
6 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty
7 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2024 and a final report no later than twenty
8 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2026.

9 OLA notes that the aspirational and exploratory goal of both resolutions are in line with the
10 mission of OLA, which is to support the recruitment and retention of language interpreters and
11 translators providing services to State and State-funded agencies. The establishment of a
12 working group is an important step toward information-sharing and the development of ideas and
13 action steps to address the language needs in our State.

14 While OLA has the subject matter and technical expertise in spoken language interpreters, OLA
15 does not have the expertise in the area of ASL to chair this working group that would make it
16 meaningful. OLA submits that another agency, specifically the Disability and Communication

1 Access Board (DCAB), is the more appropriate agency to lead this effort. Pursuant to the
2 Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR) §11-218 - COMMUNICATION ACCESS FOR PERSONS
3 WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, AND DEAF-BLIND, DCAB is charged with testing
4 sign language interpreters and issuing the Hawaii State Sign Language Interpreter Credential
5 (HSSLIC) to those who pass the test; posting a recommended fee schedule to guide State
6 agencies; operating a continuing education program for sign language interpreters to maintain
7 their HSSLIC; and providing technical assistance concerning ASL interpreting requirements and
8 other communication access requirements under the ADA. Thus, the efforts of this proposed
9 working group appear to be within the scope of DCAB's mission.

10 Nevertheless, OLA recognizes that these resolutions benefit more than the deaf and hard of
11 hearing community as persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) may also include those
12 individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and communicate using sign language interpreters.
13 Therefore, OLA would like to remain a member of this working group and is committed to
14 collaborating with DCAB and other members to further improve language access for all.

15 **Offered Amendments:** For the aforementioned reasons, OLA respectfully proposes the
16 following amendments:

- 17 • Replace [~~OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS~~] with DISABILITY AND
18 COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD on the title of the resolutions.
- 19 • Replace [~~Office of Language Access~~] with Disability and Communication Access Board
20 on Page 1, Line 28.
- 21 • Replace [~~Office of Language Access~~] with Disability and Communication Access Board
22 on Page 2, Line 9.
- 23 • Delete [~~and~~] from Page 2, Line 29.
- 24 • Amend Number (9), Page 2, Line 31 from [~~Additional representatives invited by the~~
25 ~~chairpersons of the working group; and~~] to A representative from the Office of Language
26 Access; and.

- 1 • Add Number (10) Additional representatives invited by the chairperson of the working
2 group; and on Page 2, after Line 32.
- 3 • Add the Executive Director of the Disability and Communication Access Board on Page
4 3, Line 5.
- 5 Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.