

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, March 15, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

To: The Honorable Adrian K. Tam, Chair
The Honorable Rose Martinez, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Culture, Arts & International Affairs

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

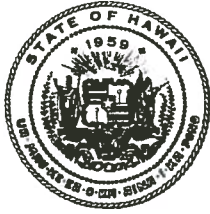
Re: S.B. No. 610

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.

S.B. No. 610 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 S.B. No. 610. Recognizing ASL as a language will increase public awareness and understanding of the Deaf community.

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 S.B. No. 610.**



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

March 15, 2023

LATE

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE ARTS & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Senate Bill 610 – Relating to American Sign Language

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 610 – 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. Senate Bill 610 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

SB-610

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 12:35:30 PM

Testimony for CAI on 3/15/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ed Chevy	Aloha State Association of the Deaf	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! My name is Ed Chevy. I am a Deaf citizen of the United States of America. The land of diversity. There is such a wide variety of beliefs, values and traditions.

I wholeheartedly support SB610 (RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE). I have always said to my country that COMMUNICATION IS POWER!

The American Sign Language (ASL) is not communication impaired. we have 100% access to communication power. ASL is a language, not a study of contradictions.

Helen Keller said Deaf people is isolated from people. Actually, Deafness was a greater affliction than blindness. We never judge Deaf people using ASL.

This is a 21st century. America is going to be a different country. we learn, we change, we move on and we get better. Please support SB610. It's a future...I promised you.

Mahalo,

Ed Chevy

SB-610

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 4:14:58 PM

Testimony for CAI on 3/15/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherry Shimizu	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Testimony of Sherry Shimizu

Submitted to the Hawaii State Senate,

Committee on Culture, Arts & International Affairs

Representative Adrian K. Tam, Chair

Representative Rose Martinez, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

Time 10:00 AM

Hawaii State Capitol House conference room 309 & Videoconference

Re: SB 610 - Relating to American Sign Language

Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Members:

My name is Sherry Shimizu, I am a graduate of Pearl City High School and received a bachelor of science degree at Rochester Institute of Technology in New York with a major in Packaging Science or better known as Engineering and minor is Criminal Justice. I am a resident of Pearl City, Senatorial District 16.

I am testifying today to express my very strong support for SB 610, which will recognize American Sign Language, or ASL as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammatical structure, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage. This bill is very important to me personally, because I have been Deaf in one ear and Hard-of-hearing in the other ear all of my life. My parents, siblings and other family members are also either Deaf or Hard-of Hearing, so we all use ASL in our everyday conversation.

ASL is not Hawaii Sign Language nor merely signed English, because most people in other countries recognize ASL is predominantly used in North America. Furthermore, ASL was already recognized here as a world language for public school language requirement purposes according to Act 152, Session Laws of Hawaii 2016. The recognition of ASL as an official state

language in Hawaii will ensure Deaf and Hard of hearing children and adults have “access to their language to take part in society. Recognizing this language results in more equitable access. This includes employment opportunities and more awareness in the public, especially when more deaf people assume leadership roles.” (Source: Catalleya Storm, publisher of “Why sign language should be an official language” hearinglikeme.com)

Hawaii is unique with multiple cultures and since we recognize ‘Ōlelo Hawai’i (spoken language) as Hawaiian Language that is not pidgin nor creole, I want to emphasize ASL is a Language that is not gesture. Just like ‘Ōlelo Hawai’i (spoken language) has proper pronunciation for vowels and consonants and the Hawaiian written alphabet consists of 13 letters, ASL has fingerspelling letters only used in North America. Fingerspelling in ASL is distinct from the fingerspelling in British Sign Language, even though both languages use the same English vowels and consonants. We also know in Hawaii, there are many influences from other countries historically, however we still recognize the differences in spoken and written between English and Hawaiian languages; similarly to locals signing in ASL, we recognize signs used in the community to communicate and comprehend each other across the 8 islands naturally with ease without any singular, specific external force.

Please help us pass this bill to recognize American Sign Language as one of the official languages in Hawai’i. Mahalo for your support and sincerely, Sherry Shimizu

March 15, 2023

Submitted to the Hawaii State House
COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, ARTS & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Honorable Rep. Adrian K. Tam, Chair
Honorable Rep. Rose Martinez, Vice Chair

Re: SB 610, RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Dear Chair Tam, Vice Chair Martinez and Members,

I would like to whole heartily support SB 610, Relating to American Sign Language.

This legislation is crucial 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 with individuals and their 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 unique Hawaiian Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind signing culture shared by their local community with nuances specific to where individuals grew up in the islands. This beautiful, expressive language needs to be acknowledged like all other spoken languages with their unique folklore and culture.

I, without reservation, strongly support SB 610 to recognize American Sign Language as a fully developed language. Kindly pass this very important bill.

Mahalo in advance,

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

PETER L. FRITZ

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

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

COMMITTEE ON CULTURE, ARTS & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Testimony on S.B. 610
Hearing: March 15, 2023

RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Chair Tam, Vice Chair Martinez 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 S.B. 610.

ASL, or American Sign Language, is a complete and complex language that is used by deaf individuals as a 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.

ASL is a primary means of communication for many deaf individuals. It is their first language.

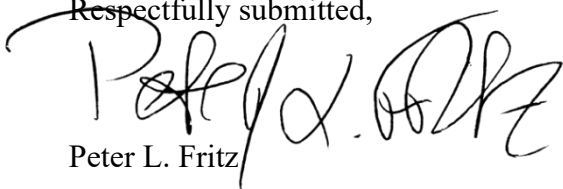
Recognizing ASL as an autonomous language acknowledges the deaf community as a linguistic and cultural minority with its own history, culture, and traditions.

Recognizing ASL as a language will increase public awareness and understanding of the deaf community and their needs.

Recognizing ASL as an autonomous language supports the rights and well-being of deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,



Peter L. Fritz

SB-610

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 10:33:58 PM

Testimony for CAI on 3/15/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maile Paongo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Aloha Dear to Whomever this may concern,

This letter is concerning the future of our Deaf Hawaiian/Local keiki, the next and future generation. I want to ensure that ASL will pass the bill and **NOT** HSL. HSL is not a documented Sign Language. For Deaf Hawaiians we use Hawaiian Hand Gestures and Local Hand Gestures. There is still research by linguistics and the community still being done. This research DOES NOT come from James Woodward who doesn't sign as well and doesn't understand Deaf people. This is a new group of people who are in the research process. ASL will bring clear communication, interpreter services, stability, education, and cultural identity to our Deaf people. I want to add and bring to the your attention the importance of having interpreter services and that the interpreters should know the different levels of ASL to be able to bring clear communication and accessibility to support the needs of Deaf people.

At the Hawaii State Capitol, I support this bill SB 610 ASL (American Sign Language).

Many people from the Deaf community and my work would come to me and ask if HSL is true. I disagree with HSL. Many Deaf and myself are not comfortable and don't understand HSL signs. I want to see young Deaf kids excel and succeed in going to college. I don't want them to be labeled as "low", limited, or "moron", or act like animals. There are more Deaf Hawaiian Kupuna (old people) that exist than Linda Lambrecht. There are still few Deaf Hawaiians that come from Hawaiian bloodline as well. Please listen to us.

If you have any questions, contact our team. Leader is Maile Paongo (Deaf) and Jazmine (Pikake) Young (Hearing), phone# (808) 256-2328 also for translating.

Below is Maile's story!

My name is Maile Paongo (maiden name Kane). I am Deaf. I was born and raised in Honolulu. Growing up, all my life, I had limited education, started oral (oralism) elementary then transferred to Hawaii School for the Deaf and Blind (HSDB) in 1967. My father was Hawaiian. I have always used Hawaiian Hand Gestures and with one word Hawaiian language. There was no such thing as Hawai'i Sign Language (HSL). I have always used oral/speech with American Sign Language (ASL) at HSDB. When I was young, I met Kupuna (Old people) at the Hawai'i Deaf club, I saw many signs most of the time were Local Hand Gestures, some Hawaiian Hand Gestures, and ASL because their time was oral at the Territory School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB). When I went to the Waikiki Deaf Club for sports, I saw many Deaf people socializing mostly with ASL and Local Hand Gestures in 1959, because we started using them at Diamond Head School. After graduating from the HSDB, I went to Seattle Central Community College for two years, got an AA degree, and when I would socialize with Deaf, I felt comfortable signing ASL. In 1977, summer time, I engaged with international Sign Languages for the Deaf Olympics in Romania. When I joined Hawaiian activities and sports, communication with Hearing, I usually would use gestures and talk. Therefore, most of the time I would gesture and talk with Hearing people and with no interpreters around.

Sincerely,

Maile Paongo

SB-610

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 10:41:36 PM

Testimony for CAI on 3/15/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jazmine Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Aloha Dear to Whom ever may concern,

This letter is concerning the future of our Deaf Hawaiian/Local keiki, the next and future generation. I want to ensure that ASL will pass the bill and **NOT** HSL. HSL is not a documented Sign Language. For Deaf Hawaiians we use Hawaiian Hand Gestures and Local Hand Gestures. There is still research by linguistics and the community still being done. This research DOES NOT come from James Woodward who doesn't sign as well and doesn't understand Deaf people. This is a new group of people who are in the research process. ASL will bring clear communication, interpreter services, stability, education, and cultural identity to our Deaf people. I want to add and bring to the your attention the importance of having interpreter services and that the interpreters should know the different levels of ASL to be able to bring clear communication and accessibility to support the needs of Deaf people.

As a Deaf advocator and someone who has been part of the Deaf community for many years. I want to ensure that Deaf people have the same equal rights and accessibility that they deserve just as Hearing people.

At the Hawaii State Capitol, I support this bill SB 610 ASL (American Sign Language) being recognized as language of culture and identity.

If you have any questions, contact our team. Jazmine (Pikake) Young (Hearing), phone# (808) 256-2328.

Sincerely,

Jazmine Young

JAN L. FRIED • American Sign Language/English Interpreter

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

14 March 2023

The Senate
Thirty-Second Legislature, 2023, State of Hawai'i
Committee on Culture, Arts and International Affairs
Senator Tam, Chair
Senator Martinez, Vice Chair

LATE

Hearing: 24 February 2023 at 9:30 AM, Conference Room 016

Testimony in Support of SB610 -Relating to American Sign Language

Aloha Senators Tam and Martinez and CAI 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 includes ASL on its roster of World Languages and provides graduating high school seniors the opportunity to earn the Seal of Biliteracy in ASL. 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 SB610. Your actions will have a profound and positive impact.

Respectfully,
Jan L. Fried

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

LATE

Honolulu, Hawaii, March 13, 2023

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

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, where I've been communicating with people in each country's sign language.

I'm writing to give my full support for the Bill SB610 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, hard-of-hearing (HH) and DeafBlind (DB) people to communicate. Being proficient in ASL allows you to communicate with a wide range of hearing, HH, DB and deaf people - including students in mainstream and deaf schools or universities and deaf, DB and 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, HH & DB 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, HH & DB students more opportunities for interactions with hearing classmates. Deaf & 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.

In my professional and personal life, I was the first deaf dance-actor for Honolulu Theater for Youth (HTY) which now they continue to use ASL interpreters in their productions for deaf & HH audiences. After my return in Hawaii since last July, I was invited to give an ASL song "Can You Hear Me" with 400 hearing singer-students from Punahou School & other schools including one from Maui at the Central United Church of Honolulu. It shows how important it is to have ASL in the Culture, Arts and International Affairs area.

I, as a deaf individual, support this Bill because it would give Deaf, HH and DB people FULL access to the Culture, Arts and International Affairs world.

Thank you for your consideration of supporting this Bill.

Sincerely yours and mahalo,

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

LATE

SB-610

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 4:56:17 PM

Testimony for CAI on 3/15/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristine Pagano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill to add a new section to Chapter 1 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes which would recognize American Sign Language (ASL). ASL originated in the early 19th century, a natural and visual language that has its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary and cultural heritage that is communicated daily in education, news, and events. ASL has gained academic recognition through Gallaudet University and schools for the deaf that are mandated placement under laws and worldwide recognition through television shows and movies with Deaf actors breaking barriers. Hawaii can break barriers by adding a new section for American Sign Language. The achievement of a new section to Chapter 1 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes that would recognize ASL increases employment opportunities for persons who utilize and communicate in ASL, increases the development and availability of ASL courses for credit, and provides a solid language base for deaf children to develop their cognitive and academic education for the full integration, independence and quality of life in society. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.