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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that one out of nine  
2 people living in Hawaii is limited English proficient. These  
3 individuals often encounter disproportionate risks before,  
4 during, and after disasters. These risks include an inability  
5 to understand evacuation orders and procedures and information  
6 from emergency relief providers and impediments that slow access  
7 to emergency medical care, sheltering assistance, and other  
8 forms of emergency relief. Moreover, in the aftermath of a  
9 disaster, many limited English proficient persons encounter  
10 barriers to obtaining relief when applying for state or county  
11 programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food  
12 assistance programs.

13           The legislature also finds that in the immediate aftermath  
14 of the August 8, 2023, Maui wildfires, language interpreters and  
15 sign language interpreters were not present at the shelters, nor  
16 was any provision made to assist individuals through remote  
17 interpretation. In the absence of a planned coordinated



1 response from the Hawaii emergency management agency and the  
2 Maui emergency management agency, Hawaii's professional and  
3 community interpreters stepped in to fill the void. Non-profit  
4 organizations adjusted their budgets and strategic and  
5 contractual obligations to meet the needs of the Maui community  
6 and continue to provide services as needed.

7 The legislature further finds that in addition to state and  
8 federal language access laws and regulations, section 308 of the  
9 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act (Stafford  
10 Act, P.L. 93-288, as amended) specifically requires entities  
11 receiving funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency  
12 to identify limited English proficient populations to ensure  
13 that they are incorporated into the disaster management planning  
14 process, ensure that such populations can access disaster relief  
15 information, and develop and maintain a database identifying  
16 qualified language assistance programs that could be activated  
17 in an emergency.

18 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to the  
19 Hawaii emergency management agency for the establishment of a  
20 limited English proficiency language access coordinator and



1 programming support for limited English proficiency community  
2 projects.

3 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$200,000 or so much  
5 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 as  
6 follows:

- 7 (1) \$100,000 for the establishment of one full-time  
8 equivalent (1.0 FTE) limited English proficiency  
9 language access coordinator position, which shall be  
10 exempt from chapter 76, Hawaii Revised Statutes,  
11 within the Hawaii emergency management agency; and  
12 (2) \$100,000 for programming support for limited English  
13 proficiency community projects, such as public service  
14 announcements, translation services, and other program  
15 projects and support.

16 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii  
17 emergency management agency for the purposes of this Act.

18 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.



**Report Title:**

Filipino Caucus; Hawaii Emergency Management Agency; Limited English Proficiency Language Access Coordinator and Programming; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds to establish a Limited English Proficiency Language Access Coordinator position and for programming support for LEP community projects within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. (CD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

