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# HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONVENE A STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE IN THE STATE THROUGH THE PROVISION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES.

1 WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of ensuring accessible,  
2 affordable, and equitable health care for all individuals is in  
3 the public interest; and

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5 WHEREAS, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandates  
6 recipients of federal financial assistance to take reasonable  
7 steps to provide meaningful access to programs, services, and  
8 activities for limited English proficient (LEP) persons; and

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10 WHEREAS, the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 American Community  
11 Survey reveals that 21.5 percent of people in the United States  
12 communicate in a language other than English at home, with 8.2  
13 percent of them having a limited ability to speak English very  
14 well, meeting the definition of limited English proficiency; and

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16 WHEREAS, in Hawaii, 25.9 percent of persons aged five years  
17 and older speak a language other than English at home; and

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19 WHEREAS, the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic underscored  
20 the critical necessity of services in Asian American, Native  
21 Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander languages, with communities  
22 having high numbers of LEP residents experiencing higher rates  
23 of incidence and mortality; and

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25 WHEREAS, the August 2023 Maui wildfires increased the need  
26 for accessible health care services, particularly for LEP  
27 individuals; and

28  
29 WHEREAS, the language barriers faced by LEP individuals  
30 contribute to decreased quality of care, poor clinical outcomes,



1 and more extended hospital stays, emphasizing the need for  
2 language assistance services; and

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4 WHEREAS, LEP individuals and those who are deaf, hard of  
5 hearing, blind, or have low vision, may require assistance such  
6 as interpreters, translated materials, or alternative formats  
7 for effective communication during health care interactions; and

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9 WHEREAS, communication and language barriers are linked to  
10 disparities in patient-provider interactions, particularly  
11 affecting racial and ethnic minorities and the twenty-four  
12 million adults with limited English proficiency residing in the  
13 United States; and

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15 WHEREAS, LEP individuals have shared experiences of having  
16 to retain their own interpreters in health care settings even  
17 after requesting their health care providers to arrange for  
18 professional interpreters; and

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20 WHEREAS, studies indicate that access to communication and  
21 language assistance is integral to the delivery of high-quality  
22 health care for all populations; and

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24 WHEREAS, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program  
25 providers, Medicare Part A providers, and organizations offering  
26 Medicare Advantage Plans and Prescription Drug Plans may need to  
27 provide language assistance services to comply with federal  
28 requirements; and

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30 WHEREAS, while major hospitals across the State have made  
31 strides in addressing language barriers, much remains to be done  
32 to ensure comprehensive language access in health care settings  
33 to guarantee equitable and effective communication for all  
34 individuals, particularly those with limited English  
35 proficiency; and

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37 WHEREAS, effective communication is crucial in health care  
38 and human services to prevent misdiagnosis, delayed medical  
39 treatment, and barriers to necessary services and programs; now,  
40 therefore,

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42 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
43 Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular  
44 Session of 2024, the Senate concurring, that the Department of



1 Health is requested to convene a Stakeholder Working Group to  
2 make recommendations to enhance meaningful access to health care  
3 in the State through the provision of language assistance  
4 services; and

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6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is  
7 requested to invite stakeholders, including at least one LEP  
8 individual with experience accessing health services, health  
9 care providers, insurers, representatives of community-based  
10 organizations, language service providers, and the Healthcare  
11 Association of Hawaii, to participate in the Stakeholder Working  
12 Group; and

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14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Stakeholder Working Group  
15 is requested to:

- 16  
17 (1) Study and assess language access in health care  
18 settings across the State and on each island in the  
19 State, including but not limited to:
  - 20  
21 (A) Experiences of LEP populations using language  
22 assistance services;
  - 23  
24 (B) Existing language assistance services and  
25 workforce;
  - 26  
27 (C) Disparities faced by LEP individuals in access to  
28 health care;
  - 29  
30 (D) Practice of using family members and friends as  
31 interpreters in health care settings;
  - 32  
33 (E) Availability of interpreters;
  - 34  
35 (F) Requirements for providing interpretation  
36 services in medical and health care settings; and
  - 37  
38 (G) Benefits and impacts of technologies such as  
39 artificial intelligence; and
- 40  
41 (2) Make recommendations to enhance meaningful access to  
42 health care in the State for individuals requiring  
43 language assistance services; and  
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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is  
2 requested to submit a report of the Stakeholder Working Group's  
3 study, findings, and recommendations, including any proposed  
4 legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior  
5 to the convening of the Regular Session of 2025; and

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7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this  
8 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health.

