



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
January 30, 2024

The Honorable Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Tarnas and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB1976 RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF ELECTIONS

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB1976**, which Appropriates funds to the Office of Elections Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee to provide voter education and outreach services for individuals with accessibility needs.

The committee is under the State Office of Elections but there was no funding designated for the committees use or control. Without funding, they cannot be proactive in increasing the accessibility for voters with disabilities through the entire voting process, from registration through casting ballots.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local governments and their election officials to ensure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote in all elections. This includes federal, state, and local elections. And it includes all parts of voting, like voter registration, selecting a location for polling places, and voting, whether on election day or during an early or absentee voting process. We appreciate the creation of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, to meet this ADA requirement. By funding the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, will help our state toward compliance of this ADA requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB1976**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

HB-1976

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 1:03:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 1/30/2024 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

In support.



LATE

Committee on JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Rep. David Tarnas, Chair

Rep. Gregg Takayama, Vice Chair

Tuesday, January 30 2024 – 2:00pm

Conference Room 325 and VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

HB 1976 – Relating to the Appropriation of Funds to the Office of Elections

Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee to provide voter education and outreach services for individuals with accessibility needs.

TESTIMONY

Holly Plackett, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii Supports HB1976 regarding appropriating funds to the Office of Elections Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee to provide voter education and outreach services for individuals with accessibility needs.

The League supports every effort to make sure **all citizens** who wish to vote are provided the information and the access to the ballot box --- and in the case of individuals with accessibility needs, this funding is needed to assure this group of citizens can vote in our elections and to make sure voting in person is not a challenge for a person with a special needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Testimony of James Gashel

Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs (JHA)

Hawaii State House of Representatives

Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2024

January 31, 2024, 2:00 PM, hearing on HB1976

Good afternoon chair, vice chair, and members. I am James Gashel, Vice Chair of the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, proudly supporting HB1976. Thank you for scheduling this hearing.

The purpose of HB1976 is to appropriate funds to the Office of Elections to be used by the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee in carrying out its duties. The legislature created the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee and comparable county committees as enacted in sections 11-10.5 and 11-10.6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, passed in 2021.

These committees are to advise election offices on barriers to access for persons with disabilities and ways to remove them. The goal is to promote greater participation in voting by persons with access needs who may otherwise be overlooked.

Federal law, called the Help America Vote Act, says voters with disabilities, such as blindness, have the right to vote privately and independently. Hawaii is a vote by mail state, so ballots are sent out in standard print to everyone. Being blind, how can I vote privately and independently if I just get a ballot in standard print? It's questions like this that our statewide committee helps the Office of Elections to understand and address.

Our statewide accessibility needs advisory committee has the challenge of being in touch with voters with disabilities in all parts of the state, including on the neighbor islands, where voter service centers, what used to be called polling places, are few and far between. This lack of polling places presents unique challenges to some voters with access needs.

Therefore, the Statewide Committee is really the voice of voters with disabilities, expected to play a crucial role in ensuring that persons with accessibility needs have equal access to participate fully in the voting process. To support this work, HB1976 seeks a modest

appropriation for information gathering, outreach, and voter education activities conducted by the statewide committee.

The Committee recommends \$10,000 to be appropriated in fiscal year 2024-2025 for this purpose. This appropriation will serve as a critical step towards achieving greater inclusivity for citizens with voting accessibility needs in the electoral process, aligning with the principles of equal representation and access to the democratic rights of all citizens.

If approved, the appropriation made in HB1976 will be dedicated for exclusive use by the accessibility needs advisory committee, not intended to be a general increase in the Office of Elections baseline budget. Information gathering, outreach, and voter education activities, focusing on accessibility needs will have particular importance as we prepare for the 2024 fall election and find better ways to meet accessibility needs in the future.

Please move this bill forward to affirm the value of this statewide committee's work. Mahalo for your consideration.

Testimony of Katie Keim

Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs (JHA)

Hawaii State House of Representatives

Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2024

January 31, 2024, 2:00 PM, hearing on HB1976

Good afternoon chair, vice chair, and members.

Mahalo for hearing my testimony. My name is Katie Keim, a blind business woman and member of the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. I am in strong support of HB1976.

The purpose of HB1976 is to appropriate funds to be used by the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee in executing its duties.

Through HB1976 The Statewide Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee recommends an appropriation of \$10,000 for the fiscal year 2024-2025.

The state office of elections has no budget for the committees work to be executed. These funds would not be an addition to the state office of elections general budget, rather specifically designated to and used by the committee ensuring the committees work is conducted in its fullest capacity.

The committee is the voice of individuals with disabilities needs for their access to an independent and private casting of their vote, a critical role throughout Hawaii ensuring that persons with accessibility needs have equal access to participate fully in the voting process.

Mahalo for your recognition of the statewide committee's important work by moving this bill forward.

HB-1976

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 1:02:01 PM

Testimony for JHA on 1/30/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Corinne Solomon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas and JHA Committee Members,

I support HB1976

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony,

Corinne Solomon HD20

HB-1976

Submitted on: 1/29/2024 1:47:35 PM

Testimony for JHA on 1/30/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia A. Morrissey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

January 30, 2024

Testimony on HB 1976:

related to obtaining a targeted appropriation for

the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

Submitted by: Patricia Morrissey, PhD

Chair of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

To: The Hawai'i House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Chairman Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Committee Members:

I very strongly support HB 1976. The purpose of HB 1976 is to establish a specific appropriation for the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. This Committee is administratively housed under the State Office of Elections. However, there are no funds specifically designated for use or control by the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. If we had designated funding, we could proactively engage in increasing the accessibility for voters with disabilities to the entire voting process, from registration through casting ballots. With the exception of one online survey of voters with disabilities conducted in 2023, which I financed personally, the Committee has not undertaken any activities requiring expenditure of funds. With targeted funding we would be able to assist County Elections

Accessibility Advisory Committees with information gathering, outreach, and voter education. My colleagues and I recommend an appropriation of \$10,000 for fiscal year 2024-2025.

According to the CDC, 20 percent of the voting population in Hawai‘i has a disability. We do not have specific data about how many of this percentage voted in past elections. But from the survey we conducted last year, even with the mail-in ballot option, voters with disabilities in Hawai‘i still faced challenges. The Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee invested substantial time last year in learning about and advising the State Office of Elections on simplification of a verification process related to electronic ballot submission. This year we would like to spend time educating voters with disabilities about the entire process connected to voting; providing advice on drafting charter amendments to make them easy to understand; and providing training to staff at voting centers on procedures and policies that ensure that voting in person is not a challenge for a person with a disability.

I wish to thank Representative Bertrand Kobayashi for introducing this very important legislation. I greatly appreciate everyone’s interest, attention, support, and timely action.

Thank you for this opportunity.