



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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February 28, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senate Bill 3290 SD1– Relating to American Sign Language

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 3290 SD1 – Relating to American Sign Language.

This bill requires the Disability and Communication Access Board to convene a working group to study the state of American Sign Language (ASL) in Hawaii. It also requires the Department of Health to assist the working group in the preparation of a report to submit to the Legislature.

The impetus behind this bill is concern with the low number of certified ASL interpreters in Hawaii. It is vital to have members of the deaf community appointed to the working group to have their perspective. Therefore, we suggest the following amendments to section 2 of the bill.

SECTION 2. (a) The disability and communication access board shall convene a working group to:

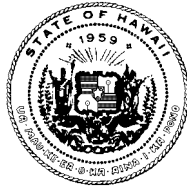
- (1) Study the state of American Sign Language interpreting in Hawaii; and
- (2) Investigate and study any means, methods, processes, or systems that might improve the provision of American Sign Language services in the State.
- (b) The working group's membership shall include the following members:
 - (1) A representative from the disability and communication access board, who shall serve as chairperson of the working group;
 - (2) A representative from the department of human services division of vocational rehabilitation;
 - (3) A representative from the department of education;
 - (4) A member of the deaf and blind task force;
 - (5) A professor from the university of Hawaii who teaches American Sign Language;
 - (6) An individual who currently serves as an American Sign Language interpreter, who shall be invited by the [~~co-chairpersons~~] chairperson of the working group; [and]
 - (7) Two deaf individuals who shall be invited by the chairperson of the working group; and
 - (8) Additional representatives invited by the [~~co-chairpersons~~] chairperson of the working group.

Thank you for considering our position.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
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TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 26, 2024

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 3290 SD1– RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE.**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 28, 2024, 10:01 a.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill and defers to the Disability and Communication Access Board and the Department of Health.

PURPOSE: This bill requires the Disability and Communication Access Board to convene a working group to study the state of American Sign Language in Hawai'i. Requires the Department of Health to assist the working group in the preparation of a report to submit to the Legislature. (SD1)

The Committee on Human Services amended the measure by:

- (1) Removing the Department of Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as a co-convener of the working group;
- (2) Removing the representative from the Department of Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as a co-chairperson of the working group;
- (3) Amending section 1 to reflect its amended purpose; and
- (4) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity and consistency.

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DHS appreciates the amendments of the Committee on Human Services and recognizes the critical service that American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters provide to deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and hearing individuals. A representative from DVR will serve on the proposed working group to study the state of ASL in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

February 28, 2024

Testimony of Eleanor Macdonald
Submitted to the Senate Ways & Means Committee

Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Honorable Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Re: SB 3290 SD1, RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice-Chair Moriwaki and Members,

I would like to whole heartedly support SB 3290 SD1, Relating to American Sign Language.

This critical legislation will require the Disability & Communication Access Board (DCAB) to set up a working group to study why there is a shortage of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters throughout the State of Hawaii especially on the neighbor islands and develop recommendations by December 31, 2024 to ensure access to life sustaining services.

People who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind very often wait 3-4 weeks or more just to schedule medical procedures or other appointments in the community because they are unable to secure an ASL interpreter, computer assisted real time captioner (CART) or an ASL interpreter using touch to convey spoken English. Some hospitals contract with on-line interpreter services with mainland-trained signers who are not aware of local landmarks, unfamiliar with Hawaiian names and places nor the unique local system of signs characteristic of ASL in our islands.

Please pass this very important bill which could improve our everyday lives.

Mahalo for your kind consideration,

Eleanor Macdonald

SB-3290-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 8:36:40 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2024 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherry Shimizu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senator Dela Cruz (Chair), Senator Moriwaki (Vice Chair), and Members of Ways and Means:

I am writing to strongly support SB3290 SD1 to set up a working group to be run by DCAB to study why Hawaii has such a shortage of ASL interpreters on all of the islands and what can be done to increase the number of interpreters. Currently, there is no consensus as everyone is separated, so let's get people together and figure out a solution together. Recently we have had qualified Deaf people hired in specific roles as listed in Section 2 (b), so please approve this study and this will provide the way and means for the members of the working group to convene for the betterment of ASL interpreters and Deaf and DeafBlind in Hawaii. (I have also submitted a prior testimony to HHS on 2/14/24 if you would like to refer to statistics on the number of interpreters certified by DCAB across the islands and estimated Severe Hearing Loss (Deaf and Hard of Hearing)).

Mahalo and sincerely,

Sherry Shimizu

Pearl City, Oahu

February 26, 2024

Written Textimony of Fanny WT Yeh, deaf individual
Submitted to the Senate Health & Human Services (HHS) Committee

Subject: SB 3290, RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Aloha, dear Honorable Senator San Buenaventura, Honorable Senator Aquino and
Members of HHS Committee:

This is Fanny Yeh, I as a deaf individual, strongly support the Bill SB 3290, Relating
to American Sign Language (ASL) with its proposal of a study on why Hawaii has a
shortage of ASL interpreters.

First of all, the role of an ASL interpreter is to bridge both Hearing, Deaf, Deaf-Blind
and Hard-of-Hearing people with equal access of communication to obtain
information and interactions.

We are aware of the shortage of ASL interpreters in Hawaii but we need a solid
evidence by a study of showing the critical needs of trainings and expanding future
ASL interpreters.

The shortage of ASL interpreters would affect many things such as a meeting,
appointment, event, family discussion, school, etc., because their service would help
to open a communication as a two-way street of allowing needs and wants to be
clearly expressed, even without spoken words.

The National Deaf Center emphasizes the importance of ASL interpreters in higher
education in order to ensure Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard-of-Hearing individuals to
obtain the language support they need and to improve their communication skills.
With this shortage in Hawaii which makes it difficult for many to participate in
educational, political, healthcare and cultural communities and organizations.

I appreciate your consideration of passing this Bill in order to help many individuals
in Hawaii to have equal access to everyday communication between both worlds who
might have never been connected before.

Again, mahalo for your full support for this Bill SB 3290.

Best regards,

Fanny WT Yeh
Deaf dancer-director/artist/small business
Phone (text): (808)-807-7851

LATE

SB-3290-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 8:22:42 PM
Testimony for WAM on 2/28/2024 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ed Chevy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ed Chevy. I am the coordinator of American Sign Language for the parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HH) students at the Hawaii School for the Deaf. I often used sign language interpreters to help me communicate with parents who do not sign enough to communicate with their children.

ASL interpreters serve as the means of communication. They facilitate communication to ensure access to information for Deaf people who communicate using American Sign language (ASL). We are losing ASL interpreters due to not enough study to understand what we need. Please help and support SB 3290. Thank you