



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

April 10, 2025

The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Justin H. Woodson and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: SCR53 SD1/ SR35 SD1 REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO COOPERATE WITH THE HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM TO IDENTIFY RURAL AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN THE STATE WITH A NEED FOR BETTER TELECOMMUNICATION ACCESS FOR RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS.

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities respectfully submits **in support on SCR53 SD1/ SR35 SD1**, which is requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to cooperate with the Hawaii State Public Library System to identify rural and underserved communities in the State with a need for better telecommunication access for residents to participate in the state legislative process.

The DD Council advocates for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) across the state. A critical part of our work is ensuring that people with disabilities, and their families, can meaningfully engage in the policies that affect their lives. This resolution directly supports that goal by working to remove barriers to civic participation.

Access to the legislative process is often limited for those living in remote areas or lacking reliable internet connectivity. This challenge is even more acute for individuals with disabilities who may face compounded obstacles due to limited transportation options, assistive technology needs, or inaccessible communication platforms.

By leveraging the Hawai'i State Public Library System's 51 branches equipped with broadband and devices, this resolution makes a vital step toward creating equitable and inclusive access to the democratic process. Importantly, it explicitly includes individuals with

developmental disabilities as a population to be considered in outreach efforts and needs assessments. We deeply appreciate this inclusive language.

We also support the proposed collaboration with the Public Access Room to increase public awareness of these resources. Outreach and education are essential to ensure that residents, especially those in underserved communities, are aware of and feel confident in using these tools to make their voices heard.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of SCR53 SD1/SR35 SD1.**

Sincerely,



Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi
Director

Shawn K. Nakama
First Assistant

Research 808-587-0666
Revisor 808-587-0670
Fax 808-587-0681



LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
State of Hawaii
State Capitol, Room 446
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Written Comments

SCR53, SD1

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO COOPERATE WITH THE HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM TO IDENTIFY RURAL AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN THE STATE WITH A NEED FOR BETTER TELECOMMUNICATION ACCESS FOR RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Charlotte A. Carter-Yamauchi, Director
Legislative Reference Bureau

Presented to the House Committee on Education

Thursday, April 10, 2025, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 309 and Via Videoconference

Chair Woodson and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon, Chair Woodson and members of the Committee, my name is Charlotte Carter-Yamauchi, and I am the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB). Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written **comments** on S.C.R. No. 53, S.D. 1, Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to Cooperate with the Hawaii State Public Library System to Identify Rural and Underserved Communities in the State with a Need for Better Telecommunication Access for Residents to Participate in the State Legislative Process.

The purpose of this measure is to request that:

- (1) The LRB cooperate with the Hawaii State Public Library System to identify rural and underserved communities with a need for better telecommunication access for residents, including those with developmental disabilities, to participate in the state legislative process;
- (2) The Public Access Room of the LRB (PAR) collaborate with the Hawaii State Public Library System to establish an outreach program to notify the public

regarding the availability of library infrastructure to support remote public participation in the state legislative process; and

- (3) The LRB submit a report to the Legislature on the implementation of the outreach program, including its findings and recommendations to further improve public access to the state legislative process, including any proposed legislation, no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2026.

The LRB takes no position on the measure but has concerns and submits the following comments for your consideration.

The measure suggests that it may be productive for the PAR to publicize the availability of tools within the Hawaii State Public Library System (HSPLS) to participate in the state legislative process. The Bureau notes that PAR already cooperates with the HSPLS, PAR staff has provided training to the HSPLS staff upon request, and the HSPLS has a webpage on <https://www.librarieshawaii.org/participate-in-the-hawaii-state-legislative-process/> that points to PAR content.

With respect to the measure's request that the LRB identify rural and underserved communities with a need for better telecommunication access for residents, including those with developmental disabilities, to participate in the state legislative process, neither the PAR nor the LRB have specific knowledge or sufficient resources to conduct a comprehensive census and demographic analysis to not only identify rural and underserved communities or areas where people with developmental disabilities may live, but also to determine if those specific groups perceive that they are underserved with regard to telecommunication access, which limits their ability to meaningfully participate in the state legislative process. Given the expertise necessary to address this issue, we believe that the Broadband Coordinator and the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office, both codified under Chapter 206S, Hawaii Revised Statutes, would be better suited to identify rural and underserved communities with a need for better telecommunication access for residents, including those with developmental disabilities, to participate in the state legislative process. Moreover, section 206S-3(4), Hawaii Revised Statutes, identifies one of the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office's key objectives as being the implementation of the 2020 Hawaii Broadband Strategic Plan, which establishes the expansion of digital inclusion and adoption to achieve digital equity as one of its primary goals and includes the identification and removal of barriers to [broadband] access and adoption to unserved and underserved as its top objective under that goal.

With respect to the request that PAR collaborate with the HSPLS "to establish an outreach program to notify the public regarding the availability of library infrastructure to support remote public participation in the state legislative process", if this refers to PAR publicizing the available resources at HSPLS locations to support remote public participation in the state legislative process, PAR currently cooperates with HSPLS and would certainly be

willing to do more to publicize such resources and efforts on the part of HSPLS. The Bureau does not believe that formal adoption of this measure is necessary for this purpose.

However, if the measure is requesting PAR to develop a separate outreach program, the Bureau notes that PAR currently has a robust outreach program, providing detailed information on submitting testimony and other aspects of the legislative process through print and electronic handouts, zoom workshops (recordings posted to YouTube for individual resident time-of-need access), and social media posts on Facebook and Instagram. PAR also has an Engagement 101 webpage with handouts and short videos on YouTube about how to register for a Legislative website account, submit testimony and more. Further, individual Legislators and Legislature-related social media accounts can and have shared or reposted PAR's content, and Legislature-related offices (and community-based organizations) have reused this content to reach an even greater audience. PAR staff are available on regular working days to answer questions from walk-in visitors, by email, and by phone.

For the Committee's information, we note the following statistics relating to PAR's outreach services:

Workshops:

January - April 8, 2025: **41 groups; 1,145 individuals; 34 hours duration.**

2024: **59 groups covering; 2,356 individuals;** (Approximate duration - at least 38.3 hours/2,300 minutes)

Phone calls:

January - March 2025: **1,054**

2024: **2,651**

Walk Ins:

January - March 2025: **1,523**

2024: **2,428**

YouTube:

January – April 8 2025: **2,284 views** Top videos “How to Submit Testimony” and “How to Register for an Account”

2024: **2,790 views (1,687 views Jan-April 2024)**

PAR Website:

Jan-April 8 2025: **47,367 page views** PAR's Engagement 101 page (which has "How to Register for an Account" and "How to Submit Testimony") was its 4th top used page with **2,318 views**

2024: 84,642 page views.

Handouts:

PAR has over **60 PDF handouts** that are made available to the public for the 2025 Regular Session and an **additional 10 handouts for keiki**.

We would also like to emphasize that PAR provides all these services with a full-time, permanent staff of only two personnel, and two additional temporary staff during Regular Sessions of the Legislature.

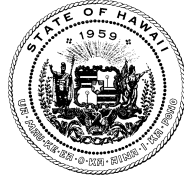
To further address concerns with rural and underserved communities that may not access PAR content online, we note that Legislators can use PAR content in their communication (including physical mailings) to their constituents. PAR can assist by providing editable word versions of documents to Legislator offices whenever possible and will consider requests to provide information in alternate formats, as time and expertise allows.

Finally, given the extensive outreach already being provided by PAR, we are uncertain what more our PAR staff of only two full-time staff members can accomplish.

If broadband telecommunication service access is the primary issue, then that issue would be better addressed by the State's Strategic Broadband Coordinator and the Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office established pursuant to Chapter 206S, Hawaii Revised Statutes, given their statutorily established purpose and duties.

Further, it seems that the HSPLS is providing as much assistance and support to their patrons as they are able with their current level of resources. We note that the issue may not be insufficient outreach by PAR or HSPLS, but rather may be that the library hours in certain remote or rural areas are not conducive for patrons to use during the time when a Legislative committee is meeting. Because many libraries work to serve patrons that are working or commuting, they may be closed during primary business hours of the Legislature in order to be open in the evening and weekends. It would be difficult for patrons to use the library as a place to provide oral testimony if the individual library location is not open during the time a committee meets. For example, many libraries that are open on Saturday are closed on Mondays or libraries that have later evening hours may not open until lunchtime. Consequently, this seems like a problem of insufficient resources of the HSPLS, and the actions requested by this measure would not address this problem. We defer to the HSPLS concerning what resources they might need to increase hours at individual library locations.

Thank you again for your consideration.



STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
'OIHANA HALE WAIHONA PUKE AUPUNI O KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
OFFICE OF THE STATE LIBRARIAN
44 MERCHANT STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Thursday, April 10, 2025
2:00pm
Conference Room 309 & Videoconference

By Stacey A. Aldrich
State Librarian

**S.C.R. 53 SD1 REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO
COOPERATE WITH THE HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM TO IDENTIFY
RURAL AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES IN THE STATE WITH A NEED FOR
BETTER TELECOMMUNICATION ACCESS FOR RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
STATE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS**

To: Rep. Justin H. Woodson, Chair
Rep. Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Education

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) offers **comments** on S.C.R. 53 SD1 which requests the Legislative Reference Bureau to cooperate with the Hawaii State Public Library System to identify rural and underserved communities in the state with a need for better telecommunication access for residents to participate in the State legislative process.

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) supports the intent of S.C.R. 53 SD1, which requires the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) to cooperate with the Hawai'i State Public Library System to identify rural and underserved communities in the state with a need for better telecommunication access for residents to participate in the state legislative process.

Hawai'i's 51 public libraries in communities across the State have been providing the public with these resources to participate in the legislative process for many years:

- Information about the legislative process
<https://www.librarieshawaii.org/participate-in-the-hawaii-state-legislative-process>
- Computers, Chromebooks, and free internet access to provide remote testimony
- Assistance provided by trained staff

More than 50% of the public libraries are located in rural communities throughout the State and are vital links to resources for these communities. In most of these rural communities, we are the only location with high-speed internet which is needed to stream legislative hearings. Further expansion to other rural areas will require additional resources.

We would like to note that during the last few years, there have been proposals to cut HSPLS positions and/or cuts to funding for staff positions in our already under-staffed statewide library system. Not unique to HSPLS, other departments and agencies also struggle with the difficult State hiring process and continued labor shortage which has amplified the difficulty in ensuring that our rural public libraries are fully staffed.

Each library's public schedule is developed based on both community needs and staffing levels. We would like to note that the quick and varied pace of the legislative hearing schedule and an individual's particular legislative interests may not fully match up with their library's schedule. Although HSPLS is always interested in expanding public hours but this is highly dependent on assurances of continued funding for staff positions and the ability to navigate a difficult hiring process.

The HSPLS is willing to work with the LRB to ensure that rural communities are able to utilize HSPLS resources to participate in the Legislative process. As part of this effort, we would like to ensure blind, low vision, and print disabled residents have increased access to legislative proceedings through resources such as the HSPLS Radio Reading Service. The HSPLS also continues to work toward ensuring that our public-facing resources are accessible to the general public.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on S.C.R. 53 SD1.