



**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

1177 Alakea Street, #402, Honolulu, HI 96813

Phone: 587-0788 Fax: 587-0783 www.shpda.org

March 30, 2026



TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON AND HUMAN SERVICES
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice Chair

FROM: John C. (Jack) Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA, and Sr. Advisor to
Governor Josh Green, MD on Healthcare Innovation

RE: **SCR 63 – Relating to Disability and Communication Access Board**

HEARING: Monday, March 30, 2026 @ 1:07 am; Conference Room 225

POSITION: SUPPORT INTENT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA agrees that patients who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or dead-blind should be provided with auxiliary aids and services, including qualified sign language interpreters, to ensure effective communication. Identifying those needs to include patient preference, site specific needs, legal duties and more is crucial.

Hawaii faces a growing number of hard of hearing residents amid its aging population with tens of thousands already affected statewide. Hearing loss significantly impacts health outcomes and quality of life, often exacerbating isolation and chronic conditions.

State data indicate tens of thousands of Hawaii residents experience some degree of hearing loss, including many with serious difficulties. This aligns with demographic projections showing Hawaii's population aged 65 + rising from 200,712 in 2020 to 215,570 by 2030 (24.4% of total population), driving higher prevalence as hearing impairment increases sharply with age. Untreated hearing loss raises risks of cognitive decline, dementia (up to 5x higher) falls, and hospitalizations as it limits communication and early detection of health issues. It correlates with depression, anxiety, and poorer management of comorbidities like diabetes or heart disease in seniors. In Hawaii's island context, access barriers amplify these effects for rural populations.

Hearing difficulties lead to social isolation, reduced independence and lower life satisfaction, straining family caregivers and increasing long term care demands. Daily challenges include misunderstandings in conversations, missing safety cues or

exclusion from community events, and worsening mental health. Early interventions like hearing aids can mitigate up to 90% of these impacts, yet affordability remains a hurdle.

A study of the communication needs of deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf blind would provide direction, identify current resources and identify gaps. This would lead to better care. SHPDA defers to the Disability and Communication Access Board on the specifics, details and costs.

Thank you for hearing this measure.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA

SR-57

Submitted on: 3/27/2026 7:30:42 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/30/2026 1:07:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

In support.



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

Mar 30, 2026

MISSION

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Roxanne U. Bolden

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair / Sec

Valerie Yamada

Vice Chair

Zora Shove

Treasurer

Jonathan Yap

Member

Scott Suzuki
Sheila Castaneda
Jennifer Hartssock

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: SCR63 – Requesting the Disability and Communication Access Board to Study the Health Care Setting Communication Needs of, and Develop Guidelines for, Individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind.

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) is a Center for Independent Living that serves people with all types of disabilities statewide. We **support SCR63.**

Effective communication in health care settings is essential for disabled people to make informed decisions, give consent, and stay safely in their homes and communities rather than in institutions. For deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind patients, lack of qualified interpreters and other auxiliary aids often leads to misunderstandings, delayed treatment, and discharge planning that ignores community-based options.

We appreciate that this resolution asks the Disability and Communication Access Board to study communication needs and update guidance for providers. We respectfully request that DCAB:

- Center the lived experience of deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and other disabled patients in the study process.
- Address how communication failures affect access to home- and community-based services and independent living



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

MISSION

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Roxanne U. Bolden

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair / Sec

Valerie Yamada

Vice Chair

Zora Shove

Treasurer

Jonathan Yap

Member

Scott Suzuki
Sheila Castaneda
Jennifer Hartssock

- Provide clear, practical guidelines so providers honor patient preferences for auxiliary aids and do not rely on family or friends as interpreters except in the narrow circumstances allowed by law.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Roxanne Bolden
Executive Director

SR-57

Submitted on: 3/28/2026 8:45:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/30/2026 1:07:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lila Mower	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the adoption of SCR 73 and SR 57.