

Honolulu, Hawaii
FEB 11, 2026

RE: H.B. No. 1531
H.D. 1

Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura
Speaker, House of Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawaii

Madame:

Your Committee on Public Safety, to which was referred H.B. No. 1531 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this measure is to:

- (1) Require the Governor or county mayor, as applicable, to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official announcement broadcast via television or the Internet during a state of emergency;
- (2) Require the Governor or county mayor to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the American Sign Language interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are visible during the broadcast; and
- (3) Require a news media outlet to display the American Sign Language interpreter in an on-screen picture-in-picture window during broadcasts or rebroadcasts of official emergency announcements.

Your Committee received testimony in support of this measure from the Disability and Communication Access Board; Hawaii Disability Rights Center; and five individuals. Your Committee



received comments on this measure from the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency; Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission; Hawai'i Association of Broadcasters, Inc.; Hawaii News Now; Island News; and KHON2.

Your Committee finds that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and rely on American Sign Language did not receive effective communication during recent public emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, August 2023 Maui wildfires, and the tsunami warning in July 2025. Significant communication barriers were reported, including the lack of qualified interpreters, interpreters being positioned too far from speakers, interpreters being partially obstructed or poorly lit, and television broadcasts failing to ensure interpreters were clearly visible on screen. As a result, many individuals who rely on American Sign Language were unable to readily access crucial, time-sensitive information necessary to protect their health and safety. This measure seeks to avoid such issues in the future and ensure individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing get the timely information they need during emergencies.

Your Committee has amended this measure by:

- (1) Rather than requiring a news media outlet to display the American Sign Language interpreter in an on-screen picture-in-picture window during broadcasts or rebroadcasts of official emergency announcements, requiring the Governor or a county mayor, as applicable, to provide a primary pool feed for any live official announcement that includes an American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window;
- (2) Explicitly providing that broadcasters that rebroadcast the official announcement shall not be required to independently generate or insert the accessibility feature identified in paragraph (1);
- (3) Changing its effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (4) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.



As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Public Safety that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 1531, as amended herein, and recommends that it pass Second Reading in the form attached hereto as H.B. No. 1531, H.D. 1, and be referred to your Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Public Safety,

Delia Au Belatti

DELIA AU BELATTI, Chair



