



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

Ka 'Oihana Ho'oka'a'ike no ka Po'e Kīnānā

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February 13, 2026

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND COMMERCE

House Bill 1776 House Draft 1 – Relating to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports the intent of House Bill 1776 House Draft 1 – Relating to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code. This bill requires the Office of Consumer Protection to periodically publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenant rights. Requires a landlord to provide a tenant with a copy of the notice of tenant rights.

DCAB frequently receives questions from landlords or tenants with disabilities who are unsure about their rights and responsibilities regarding effective communication, reasonable accommodations, reasonable modifications, and assistance animals.

When this information is not clearly understood at the beginning of a tenancy, misunderstandings and misapplications of the law can occur. These situations may irreparably damage the landlord-tenant relationship. Providing clear guidance at the start of a rental agreement helps ensure that both parties understand their rights and obligations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

KRISTINE PAGANO
Acting Executive Director



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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS
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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Friday, February 13, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference
Conference Room 325**

On the following measure:

H.B. 1776, H.D. 1, RELATING TO THE RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD-TENANT CODE

Chair Tarnas and Members of the Committee:

My name is Emma Olsen, and I am an Enforcement Attorney for the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' (Department) Office of Consumer Protection (OCP). The Department appreciates the intent of this bill and offers comments and concerns.

The purpose of this bill is to require OCP to periodically publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenant rights and require that landlords provide tenants with a copy of the notice of tenant rights at or before the time the tenant signs a rental agreement. OCP currently publishes the Landlord-Tenant Handbook (LT Handbook), and we re-publish in response to changes to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code. As the Committee is aware, changes happen nearly every legislative session. A digital copy of the LT Handbook is available for free on our website, and written copies may be purchased or mailed.

We recently began exploring ways to make the LT Handbook more accessible, starting by focusing on the topics that generate the most public inquiries—evictions, security deposits, repairs, and breaking the lease. We are assessing ways to make these sections, and ultimately the entire handbook, more accessible to the public. The concept proposed in this bill complements our ongoing initiative.

We have concerns, however, about requiring a second resource to be published in addition to the existing LT Handbook. The review, editing, and publication process for our LT Handbook involves our investigative, legal, and administrative staff, with final approval by OCP's Executive Director and assistance from the Department's communications team. Establishing a separate publication would effectively replicate these same procedures for drafting, reviewing, approving, and publishing, thereby increasing staff workload. We review the LT Handbook annually to ensure that the information provided to the public remains current. Our current annual review process is consistent with the annual review timeline in the bill.

Regarding language access, we have inquired about obtaining translation services for the LT Handbook. While we do not have the quoted translation costs readily available, we can follow up with the Committee as needed on the costs of translation services.

Regarding accessibility for individuals with disabilities, as part of a department-wide initiative, we are reviewing all materials available to the public through our website, including electronic documents, to ensure they meet accessibility requirements by the April 24, 2026 deadline under the Department of Justice's final rule updating its regulations for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Department's goal is to complete this accessibility review by the end of the first quarter of 2026.

While we support the intent of this bill to enhance public awareness of tenant rights, we are concerned that requiring a separate publication would duplicate existing efforts and strain current resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 1776 HD1
RELATING TO THE RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD
TENANT CODE

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Ho‘okolokolo a me ke Kuleana Hawai‘i
(House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Pepeluali 13, 2026

2:00PM

Lumi 325

Aloha e Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) SUPPORTS **HB1776 HD1**.

OHA’s constitutional and statutory responsibilities include advocating for the betterment of Native Hawaiians and supporting public policies that promote housing stability, access to justice, and community well-being. This measure advances those responsibilities by improving tenant access to clear, accurate, and culturally and linguistically appropriate information about existing tenant protections under Hawai‘i law.

Hawai‘i’s housing crisis continues to disproportionately impact Native Hawaiians. Native Hawaiians are overrepresented among renter households, cost-burdened households, and households experiencing housing instability and displacement. Many renters face language barriers, limited access to legal assistance, and fear of retaliation, all of which make it difficult to understand and assert rights under the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code.

OHA supports this bill because it addresses a critical and practical gap in tenant protections. Providing clear, understandable information at the time a lease is signed helps prevent disputes and housing instability later in the tenancy. While tenant rights exist in statute, those protections function as self-help laws that often require tenants to navigate complex legal systems on their own. Without accessible guidance, renters may

unknowingly waive rights, fail to seek assistance early, or face avoidable eviction and homelessness. This measure strengthens housing stability by requiring the Office of Consumer Protection to develop, maintain, and regularly update a clear, standalone notice of tenant rights, ensuring the notice is multilingual, accessible to persons with disabilities, and available in both print and electronic formats; and requiring landlords to provide tenants with the notice in the tenant's preferred language when available at or before lease signing, helping renters make informed decisions. Early access to accurate tenant information can help prevent avoidable displacement, reduce housing instability, and promote fairer landlord-tenant relationships statewide.

For Native Hawaiian families, stable housing is closely tied to the preservation of 'ohana networks, access to cultural and community support systems, and long-term economic and health outcomes. Native Hawaiians experience disproportionate impacts across Hawai'i's rental housing system. Native Hawaiians are more likely to be renters, more likely to be rent-burdened, and more likely to experience housing instability and displacement than the general population. Native Hawaiians are also overrepresented among households facing eviction filings and among individuals experiencing homelessness. These disparities are compounded by barriers to justice, including limited access to legal representation, language access challenges for multi-generational households, and fear of retaliation when asserting tenant rights. Because the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code operates primarily as a self-help framework, unequal access to clear and understandable legal information can result in unequal outcomes. Ensuring that tenants receive accessible, multilingual notice of their rights at lease signing is a preventative approach that promotes due process, reduces avoidable disputes, and advances fairness in Hawai'i's civil justice system.

OHA respectfully urges the Legislature to pass HB1776 HD1 as amended, which represents a modest but meaningful step toward improving housing stability, advancing language access, and ensuring that tenant protections enacted by law are actually reachable by the people they are intended to serve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Medical-Legal Partnership for Children in Hawai'i
A Project of the William S. Richardson School of Law

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Representative David A. Tarnas, Chair

Representative Mahina Poepoe, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: February 13, 2026 at 2:00PM (Room 325)

Re: SUPPORT for HB 1776 HD 1, Relating to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code

Dear Committee Members,

The Medical-Legal Partnership for Children in Hawai'i provides free, direct legal services to patients in community health settings. Many of our clients are low-income tenants and residents facing unstable housing situations. We testify in **SUPPORT** for **HB 1776 HD 1**, that would promote tenants' knowledge of their rights under the Hawai'i residential Landlord-Tenant Code.

Housing cases comprise nearly one-third of all cases at our Medical-Legal Partnership program. We have counseled hundreds of local families about their housing rights, and we believe that many more tenants would be able to self-advocate and successfully resolve claims if they better understood their rights under the Landlord-Tenant Code. This includes, for example, tenant rights and remedies related to lease terminations, habitability/repairs, and security deposits.

It is especially important to ensure meaningful access to the critical information in a notice of tenant rights. We applaud the inclusion in this bill of requirements to translate the notice into the most commonly spoken languages in the state, and for landlords to provide this information to new tenants. This is the least we can do to promote more stable landlord-tenant relationships and promote housing stability across the state.

I humbly add that the provisions of HB 1776 are a good starting point, but more is needed to meaningfully increase tenant protections in Hawai'i. We work with many families facing unstable housing that could be strengthened with stronger rent stabilization, habitability enforcement, and more robust consumer protections.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1776 HD 1.

/s/

Dina Shek

Legal Director



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of the Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for HB1776 HD1– Relating to the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code
House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Friday, February 13, 2026 at 2:00PM Conf. Rm. 325 and via Videoconference

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support of HB1776 HD1**, which would require the Office of Consumer Protection to publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenants rights and require a landlord to provide a tenant with a copy of the tenant rights. Clear communication of rights is a foundational step in promoting housing security and preventing exploitation or misunderstanding in landlord-tenant relationships.

Hawaii’s landlord-tenant code is a self-help system: it assumes tenants and landlords know the rights and responsibilities spelled out in HRS Chapter 521 and can act on them in civil court. Yet statutory duties—such as complying with rules ‘brought to the attention of the tenant’¹ at the start of the tenancy and providing proper notice of defects—resupposes that tenants can actually read and understand those rules.

National fair housing organizations have found that lack of meaningful language access prevents limited-English-proficient tenants from understanding leases, house rules, and hearing procedures, increasing the risk of losing housing because they never fully understood their rights or obligations.² By mandating *accessible* multilingual notices, HB1776 HD1 helps ensure that all tenants—regardless of language proficiency—are better equipped to understand and assert their rights under Hawai‘i’s landlord-tenant code.

Requiring landlords to provide this notice at the outset of tenancy promotes transparency and accountability. It helps foster a more balanced relationship between landlords and tenants, reducing the risk of disputes and misunderstandings. Best practices in tenant protection consistently highlight the value of proactive education and notification in reducing legal conflicts and improving housing outcomes for vulnerable populations.³

We respectfully recommend collaboration with community organizations in developing and disseminating these notices which could further enhance the reach and impact. We appreciate the Legislature’s attention to tenant rights and urge passage of this bill as a meaningful step toward a fairer, more just housing system in Hawai‘i.

¹ https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol12_Ch0501-0588/HRS0521/HRS_0521-0052.htm

² <https://www.nhlp.org/initiatives/fair-housing-housing-for-people-with-disabilities/language-access/>

³

<https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Eviction-Diversion-and-Prevention-Programs.pdf>

To: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
Re: **HB1776 HD1 – Relating to Housing**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 13, 2026; 2:00 PM

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Poepoe, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1776 HD1**. This bill requires the Office of Consumer Protection to periodically publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenant rights; requires the notice to be included in the informational handbook on the Residential Landlord-Tenant Code maintained by the Office; and requires a landlord to provide a tenant with a copy of the notice of tenant rights in the tenant's preferred language, if available, and subjects the landlord to a fine for failure to do so.

During the pandemic, non-profit organizations like ours worked hard to help limited English proficiency (LEP) families in Hawai'i access the pandemic relief benefits that they qualified for. While working on this outreach, we learned that there was a lack of meaningful language access for LEP families, and that the federal government does not provide translations¹ in many of the languages that are the most spoken by LEP families in Hawai'i² – such as Ilocano, Marshallese, Tongan, and Chuukese.

In the aftermath of the Lahaina wildfires, our state again learned about the lack of resources to address the language needs of Hawai'i's residents, causing them to miss out on essential assistance. According to the language services coordinator for FEMA, who coordinated language access response after both the Lahaina and Paradise, California, fires, "the diverse cultures of Maui and the fact that many people did not feel comfortable dealing with government agencies, made the response in Lahaina unique."³

As one of the states with the highest portion of foreign-born residents,⁴ we believe Hawai'i needs to better ensure language access to our government services than most other states do. This bill would be a great step in that direction.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

¹ United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/translated-applications>

² Hawai'i Data Exchange Partnership, https://hawaiidxp.org/quick_data/datastory/el

³ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/03/people-who-dont-speak-english-lost-money-and-help-in-lahaina-response/>

⁴ Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/312701/percentage-of-population-foreign-born-in-the-us-by-state/>

HB-1776-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 3:24:15 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patrick Hurney	Hope Services Hawaii	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

My name is Patrick F. Hurney, and I am testifying in strong support of HB1776, which requires the Office of Consumer Protection to publish accessible, multilingual notice of tenants rights.

This measure is an important step toward addressing Hawai'i's housing crisis by creating access to housing opportunities and retention for families. I urge you to pass HB1776 and invest in access, invest in people, and invest in a future where our keiki can remain home.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Patrick F. Hurney

HB-1776-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 7:12:44 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kami Yamamoto	Hawai'i Workers Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In our line of work organizing low-wage non-union workers, we often get asked to help translate or interpret paperwork or other important documents in English for Filipino and COFA workers, not necessarily because we speak the language, but because the language that is in these notices are full of jargon and difficult to comprehend - and these are people who have lived in Hawai'i for decades.

Too often do we hear that workers make health, housing, and employment decisions without fully understanding the implications of their decision -- this is not to their own fault, but it's an issue of language accessibility.

The passage of this bill is one step towards allowing migrants in Hawai'i to understand and advocate for their own rights, especially in a time where not speaking English or being born in a foreign country is under attack.

HB-1776-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 3:43:58 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kayla Marie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this measure

HB-1776-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 8:13:11 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Olderr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this common sense bill

HB-1776-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:08:30 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB1776, a deceptively simple bill with profound implications for housing justice in Hawai‘i. It requires the Office of Consumer Protection to publish an accessible, multilingual notice of tenant rights and mandates that landlords provide this notice to every tenant at the outset of tenancy. This is not paperwork; it is power. And for thousands of Hawai‘i families, it is power they have been denied for far too long.

Hawai‘i's landlord-tenant code operates on a dangerous fiction: that everyone who signs a lease understands the rights and remedies contained within HRS Chapter 521. We call this a "self-help" system, but help is only possible if you know what you are entitled to, can read the document that confers those entitlements, and possess the language and cultural fluency to assert them. For limited-English-proficient tenants, for immigrant families, for seniors navigating complex legal text—this system does not provide help. It creates a trap.

National fair housing research confirms what community advocates have known for decades: the absence of meaningful language access is not a neutral omission. It is an active mechanism of exploitation.

Tenants who cannot fully understand their leases, house rules, or eviction notices are exponentially more vulnerable to illegal lockouts, uninhabitable conditions, retaliation, and wrongful displacement. They lose their homes not because they violated the law, but because the law was never effectively communicated to them in the first place. This is a failure of basic justice, and it falls heaviest on those already marginalized by poverty, immigration status, and systemic exclusion.

HB1776 fixes this. It mandates clear, accessible, multilingual notices that explain tenant rights in plain language, available in the languages our communities actually speak. It requires landlords to provide this notice at the very beginning of the tenancy, before problems arise and rights are forfeited by ignorance. It transforms the landlord-tenant relationship from one of presumed knowledge to one of affirmative transparency.

This bill does not create new rights; it makes existing rights real. It does not punish landlords; it educates tenants. It is a low-cost, high-impact intervention that reduces disputes, prevents costly litigation, and stabilizes families in their homes. Best practices in tenant protection across the

country consistently affirm that proactive, accessible education is one of the most effective tools for preventing homelessness before it begins.

The committee should consider language to facilitate collaboration with community organizations in developing and disseminating these notices. The organizations that work alongside immigrant tenants, kūpuna, and low-income renters every day know exactly what information is needed and how to deliver it with cultural humility and linguistic accuracy. Their partnership will be invaluable.

HB1776 is a meaningful, achievable, and urgently needed step toward a fairer housing system in Hawai‘i. In a state with the highest cost of living in the nation and a displacement crisis that shows no signs of abating, we cannot afford to leave any tenant behind simply because they speak a different language. Clear communication is not a luxury; it is a prerequisite for justice.

I urge you to pass this bill and send an unmistakable message: in Hawai‘i, your right to understand your rights is not optional. It is guaranteed.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1776-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:26:22 PM

Testimony for JHA on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1776, which requires the office of consumer protection to publish accessible, multilingual notice of tenants rights and requires a landlord to provide a tenant with a copy.

Mahalo.

HB-1776-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 8:38:27 AM

Testimony for JHA on 2/13/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ronald Paul Woods II	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB1776 HD1. Too many Landlords take advantage of people whose second language is English. This will greatly help our immigrant community and hold landlords accountable for taking advantage of people.