

DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA LAWELAWE KUPA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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February 10, 2026

The Honorable Darius K. Kila, Chair
The Honorable Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Transportation
State Capitol, Conference Room 430
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the House Committee on Transportation:

SUBJECT: H.B. No. 1993 - Relating To Deaf Individuals
HEARING: Thursday, February 12, 2026, 8:30 a.m.

The City and County of Honolulu, Department of Customer Services (CSD) respectfully offers **comments** to H.B. No. 1993 for your committee's consideration. Pursuant to Section 6-402 of the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu, CSD Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) administers the motor vehicle registration program for the island of O'ahu.

While CSD DMV supports the intent of the proposed legislation, we appreciate the opportunity to provide the following comments regarding anticipated operational impacts associated with instituting and administering a new process to add a designation bearing the international symbol for deafness or a numerical code designating deafness to the motor vehicle registration for a vehicle owned by a deaf individual:

- **Statewide Coordination of Data and Systems Integration:** Instituting and administering a new process to add a deafness designation to a motor vehicle registration will require database sharing and close coordination across all counties statewide, the State Department of Transportation, and the Honolulu

Department of Information Technology to support eligibility determinations and enforcement, and to ensure consistent standards, procedures, and public communications. Implementation will require updates to staff training, public information materials, application forms, and supporting technology systems to ensure consistent statewide administration.

- **Customer Service Considerations:** Instituting and administering a new process to add a deafness designation to a motor vehicle registration would also introduce additional complexity in the appointment scheduling process and at customer service windows, resulting in increased processing times and the potential for customer confusion.

An adequate amount of time will be required to initiate and coordinate efforts with the State Department of Transportation, the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Information Technology, and the counties of Hawai'i, Kaua'i, and Maui, regarding implementation of all necessary administrative procedures and updates; funding to support additional staffing; and funding for information technology upgrades.

CSD respectfully requests that the administrative, enforcement, and resource impacts on the motor vehicle registration system be carefully considered as this measure undergoes deliberation.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. No. 1993.

Sincerely,

for Kimberly M. Hashiro
Director

HB-1993

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 2:24:31 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/12/2026 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

This is a good idea. It will potentially avoid confusion and confusion which could lead to dire consequences. It would be easy for a law enforcement officer to mistake a deaf person's lack of understanding for non compliance.

HB-1993

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:52:44 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/12/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynn Murakami Akatsuka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 1993 for passage this legislative session. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

HB-1993

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 8:55:00 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/12/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beth Amaro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB 1993, which would allow a voluntary designation on a motor vehicle registration to indicate that the vehicle owner is deaf, solely for the purpose of alerting law enforcement officers during a traffic stop.

Routine traffic stops can be stressful and unpredictable for both drivers and law enforcement officers. For deaf drivers, the risk of miscommunication is much higher. A deaf driver may not hear verbal commands, may respond using gestures that are misunderstood, or may require additional time to comply—circumstances that can unintentionally escalate an otherwise routine interaction. Likewise, officers who are unaware that a driver is deaf may misinterpret a lack of verbal response as noncompliance.

HB 1993 addresses this safety concern in a reasonable way. By allowing a deafness designation to appear only when law enforcement accesses motor vehicle registration information, the bill promotes safer interactions without requiring disclosure beyond what is necessary. The bill also includes safeguards to restrict access to this information, protecting the privacy of deaf individuals while still serving a clear public safety purpose.

The bill’s clear definition of “deaf” and its certification requirements ensure that the designation is applied consistently and appropriately. Making the designation voluntary respects individual choice while offering a practical tool to reduce misunderstandings, prevent unnecessary escalation, and protect both law enforcement officers and deaf drivers.

HB 1993 reflects a thoughtful balance between public safety, disability awareness, and privacy. It promotes inclusion and recognizes the real-world experiences of deaf individuals navigating Hawai‘i’s roadways.

Please support for HB 1993. Mahalo.

Beth Amaro, Lihue, Kauai

HB-1993

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 9:58:49 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/12/2026 8:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am writing to support HB 1993. This bill is about my safety and the safety of police officers. I have a hard time hearing when I am near a road with many cars. I worry that a police officer will be upset if I do not hear their words. I also worry that using my hands to speak will look like a threat. This bill lets an officer know I cannot hear well before the officer walks to my car. It helps everyone stay calm. Please pass this bill. Thank you for your time.

HB-1993

Submitted on: 2/10/2026 7:23:37 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/12/2026 8:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry Support

1993 HB RELATING TO DEAF INDIVIDUALS.

PETER L. FRITZ
T-MOBILE RELAY: (808) 586-0077
EMAIL: PLFLEGIS@FRITZHO.COM

To: House Committee on Transportation
Hearing Date: February 12, 2026

RE: Testimony in support of HB 1993, Relating to Deaf Individuals

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am Peter Fritz. I am hard of hearing, an attorney, an advocate for the disabled, and a former member of the Disability and Communication Access Board and the State Rehabilitation Advisory Committee. My professional experience and personal background allow me to provide this perspective.

I am testifying in support of HB 1993, which proposes a designation on vehicle registrations to notify law enforcement officers that the driver is deaf. This designation would be visible only to law enforcement officers when they check the vehicle registration information. The intention of this proposal is to prevent misunderstandings between law enforcement officers and drivers during traffic stops. **I am proposing amendments to the bill, which are discussed below.**

After reading about a new law in a New Jersey Bar publication, I provided the Deaf Blind Task Force with information regarding the New Jersey law. The Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) then drafted a bill based on the New Jersey legislation, but changed the decibel level from the level specified in that law. I am concerned about this change.

As an individual who is hard of hearing, I find it difficult to understand the instructions of an officer when there is significant background noise, such as the sound of traffic. The noise in these environments interferes with my ability to hear and understand verbal commands. If an officer is unaware of my hearing status, my failure to respond or my attempts to communicate may be misinterpreted as noncompliance. The proposed designation allows officers to be informed of my hearing status, which reduces the likelihood of such misunderstandings.

The current language of the bill limits the definition of "deaf" to individuals with a hearing loss at or above 82 decibels. This definition is limited in scope because it excludes individuals who are hard of hearing and who face similar communication barriers during interactions with law enforcement in noisy environments. **I recommend that the bill be amended to include a "person with a hearing loss of a pure tone average of 41 decibels or greater," which is the standard in the New Jersey law.**

Additionally, **I recommend that the provision regarding the use of income tax forms to verify a hearing disability be deleted from the bill.** I believe that the certification requirements for obtaining a disabled parking permit are more appropriate for verifying a hearing disability.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.