



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA

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February 13, 2026

The Honorable Gregg Takayama, Chair
House Committee on Health
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Takayama and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB1995 Relating to Parking for Persons with Disabilities

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities is in **OPPOSITION to HB1995**, which provides that people who are blind or deaf are eligible to apply for and receive a disabled paid parking permit.

The Council is concerned that the bill, as drafted, introduces new eligibility categories without clear definitions or alignment with existing statutory criteria. Expanding eligibility in this manner may result in significant increases in permit issuance without a corresponding increase in accessible parking supply, creating unintended access barriers for people with mobility disabilities.

The Council respectfully defers to the Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) on any proposed amendments, definitions, or alternative approaches. DCAB is best positioned to evaluate parking capacity, eligibility standards, and the operational impacts of changes to the disability parking permit system. We encourage continued stakeholder engagement and careful policy development through a working group to ensure that any changes preserve access for those with the greatest need and reflect the needs of all stakeholders.

For these reasons, the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities **Opposes HB1995**.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Daintry Bartoldus, Executive Administrator



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 HEALTH

House Bill 1995 – Relating to Parking for Persons with Disabilities

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) opposes House Bill 1995 – Relating to Parking for Persons with Disabilities. This bill provides that people who are blind or deaf are eligible to apply for and receive a disabled paid parking permit.

In 1988, Congress adopted Public Law 100-641 which directed the United States Department of Transportation to recommend regulations for states to issue parking permits to people with disabilities *which limit or impair the ability to walk*. The State of Hawaii's eligibility criteria are based on these regulations, 23 CFR 1235 - The Federal Uniform System for Parking for Persons with Disabilities and codified in part III of chapter 291, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

HRS §291-51 defines a person with a disability for the purposes of this part as someone who:

- (1) Cannot walk two hundred feet without stopping to rest, and who has been diagnosed with:
 - (A) An arthritic, neurological, orthopedic, renal, vascular, or oncological condition;
 - (B) Lung disease to such an extent that the person's forced (respiratory) expiratory volume for one second, when measured by spirometry, is less than one liter, or the arterial oxygen tension is less than sixty mm/hg on room air at rest; or
 - (C) A cardiac condition to the extent that the person's functional limitations are classified in severity as Class III or Class IV according to the standards set by the American Heart Association; and
- (2) Because of a condition identified in paragraph (1):
 - (A) Cannot walk two hundred feet under the person's own power without stopping to rest;
 - (B) Cannot walk without the use of, or assistance from, a brace, cane, crutch, another person, prosthetic device, wheelchair, or other assistive device; or
 - (C) Uses portable oxygen.

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Resolution 85-22, finds that blindness, in and of itself, is not a mobility impairment and that the problems blind persons face with respect to mobility cannot be remedied by making handicapped parking spaces available to them. Furthermore, the resolution states that the NFB opposes the use of a

parking space designated for persons with disabilities by blind persons who do not truly need a space.

Qualifying for a disability parking permit is not a benefit for people with mobility disabilities. Rather, ensuring access to facilities for people with mobility limitations is a legal requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

DCAB statistics show that every year on average, the number of active parking permittees grows 1.5%. Conservatively, expanding the eligibility to include blind and deaf individuals adds 50,000 people, which equals to a 46% increase. The total number of permittees would rise from 109,703 to 159,703. Hawaii's current population is 1.4 million, this means 11% of residents will have a disability parking permit. A parking lot with 150 total spaces or less is required to have a minimum of 4% of its spaces be accessible, in larger lots the requirement falls as low as 2%.

The scarcity of accessible parking spaces for the current 109,703 permittees is already recognized as a critical issue, as reflected in Senate Bill 2936 and House Bill 2442 which increase the number of required accessible and van accessible parking spaces in parking lots with more than twenty-five parking spaces that are covered by Titles II or III of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

DCAB opposes any proposal to expand the eligibility criteria to include other disabilities due to the insufficient number of accessible parking spaces to accommodate a 46% increase of permittees who are blind or deaf.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kristine Pagano". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

KRISTINE PAGANO
Acting Executive Director

Testimony submitted by Virgil Stinnett

house health (HLT) Committee

Thirty-third Legislature, 2026 Regular Session

February 13, 2026, 9:00 am — hearing on HB1995

Good morning Chair, Vice Chair, and Members. I am Virgil Stinnett, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii submitting testimony in opposition to HB1995as written.

I stand on my testimony in support of testimony submitted by James Gashel, legislative chair, for the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit my testimony

National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii

Testimony submitted by James Gashel, legislative chair

House of Representatives

Health (HLT) Committee

Thirty-third legislature, 2026 regular session

February 13, 2026, 9:00 am, hearing on HB1995

Good morning Chair Takayama, and Vice Chair Keohokapu-Lee Loy, and members. I am James Gashel, National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Hawaii, legislative chair, testifying in opposition to HB1995 as introduced, and suggesting a disability parking permit stakeholders' working group convened by DCAB would be best right now. It's important to get this right both for those who are eligible and those who are not.

HB1995 is a bill relating to parking for persons with disabilities, about eligibility for disability parking permits.

Current law is focused on eligibility for persons who have significant walking restrictions and has very specific medical criteria used to define "person with a disability," for parking permit eligibility. HB1995 does not change the restricted walking criteria or any other existing eligibility requirements relating to disability. The only thing it does do is to add "blind or deaf," without saying that the existing disability walking restrictions would also apply.

It's clear on the face of the text of this bill that every person who is blind would be eligible for a disability parking permit, just because the person is blind and for no other reason. Same is true with every person who is deaf. But the law is far more restrictive for persons with disabilities, other than blindness or deafness. Persons with disabilities, other than blindness or deafness will still have to meet specific, medically specified inability to walk criteria that would not apply to persons who are blind or deaf.

The terms "blind," or "deaf," are not defined. The only limitation or definition is certification by a licensed practicing physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse to certify that the person is blind or deaf, not that the person's ability to walk is restricted.

It's easy to say "yes, let's just add blind or deaf to the disability parking permit list." You can do this, but the consequences for other persons with disabilities, currently eligible must also be considered.

Our concern for everyone is the definitions need to be clear as to who is and who is not eligible. The first attachment makes clear that as many as 29,000 people with vision difficulties age 17 and older, and over 55,000 people with hearing difficulties age 17 and older, equalling about 85,000 blind or deaf people could become eligible. These numbers could be higher or lower, depending on whether medical or functional definitions of "blind," or "deaf," are used. With numbers this large, it's important to think this through and to get it right in the beginning, rather than taking a chance and then trying to limit a benefit later.

The second attachment gives definitions often used for blindness, deafness, and deaf-blindness. It's important to note that none of these definitions includes walking restrictions, so these definitions aren't best used for parking permit eligibility.

Taken together, these attachments show that several thousand disability parking permits could end up going to persons who may or may not have restricted walking ability, as compared to persons with other disabilities who would still have to meet very specific medical criteria in the law to show restricted walking ability. Something is wrong with this picture.

If the bill intended to add eligibility only for persons who are both deaf and blind, referred to as "deaf-blind," it should say that. I know this is what the Deaf and Blind Task Force intended when we discussed this bill in December, but the bill came out saying "blind or deaf," with no definition of either term, and no definition of deaf-blind either. It's possible

that deafness and blindness as a combined disability may lead to significant safe walking restrictions, roughly equivalent to those in law for persons with other disabilities.

You could amend this bill to give eligibility to persons who are both deaf and blind, just change "or" to "and," referring then to "deaf-blind," but there's still the definition problem. Deaf-blind is defined in DCAB's administrative rules, but this refers to receiving communications services from DCAB, not to walking restrictions, which are more relevant to parking. You could amend the bill to say deaf-blind who meet the disability walking restrictions, but those people are likely already eligible without a change in the law.

The point is, this bill needs work. It should not be passed as is. An option we would support is an amended bill to have a "disability parking permit stakeholders' working group," convened by DCAB to consider changes needed (if any), and to report back to the legislature before the session next year.

NFB of Hawaii definitely supports and asks for changes in law to meet the realistic needs of blind and deaf-blind people in our state. We also have the responsibility to say when these changes are justified, or if they are not, as in the case of HB1995. We look forward to working on this parking permit eligibility matter further, but must oppose HB1995 as being far too over broad in what it is trying to do.

It's good to want to say "yes," and to be nice, but it's better to make public policy after it's been fully vetted and justified. Mahalo for your consideration.

TABLE 11.14-- DISABILITY STATUS AND NUMBER OF PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY, FOR THE STATE AND OAHU: 2022

[Excludes the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters.
Data are based on a sample; the confidence interval is 90 percent]

Age and disability status	State		Oahu	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age under 5 years				
With any disability	406	157	406	142
With a hearing difficulty	406	-	406	-
With a vision difficulty	27	157	27	142
Age 5 to 17 years				
With any disability	6,406	3,591	4,340	2,575
With a hearing difficulty	547	600	395	398
With a vision difficulty	694	862	362	862
With a cognitive difficulty	5,181	1,806	3,186	1,319
With an ambulatory difficulty	782	244	698	185
With a self-care difficulty	1,152	478	665	317
Age 18 to 34 years				
With any disability	9,723	9,753	6,963	7,001
With a hearing difficulty	1,218	801	1,094	758
With a vision difficulty	1,816	2,056	1,128	1,391
With a cognitive difficulty	6,534	6,641	4,483	4,704
With an ambulatory difficulty	1,600	1,283	1,162	765
With a self-care difficulty	853	230	427	188
With an independent living difficulty	4,306	4,255	3,248	2,317
Age 35 to 64 years				
With any disability	32,003	28,775	21,231	16,932
With a hearing difficulty	9,408	4,567	6,842	3,263
With a vision difficulty	5,736	6,403	2,739	4,356
With a cognitive difficulty	13,686	13,464	8,635	6,388
With an ambulatory difficulty	13,760	13,046	9,017	8,433
With a self-care difficulty	5,938	5,272	3,717	3,444
With an independent living difficulty	11,160	9,328	7,602	5,368

Continued on next page.

TABLE 11.14-- DISABILITY STATUS AND NUMBER OF PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY, FOR THE STATE AND OAHU: 2022 -- Con.

Age and disability status	State		Oahu	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
65 to 74 years				
With any disability	19,734	16,316	11,025	9,874
With a hearing difficulty	8,897	3,857	4,550	2,142
With a vision difficulty	2,541	2,775	1,528	1,750
With a cognitive difficulty	5,621	3,096	2,972	2,124
With an ambulatory difficulty	10,009	10,253	5,931	6,727
With a self-care difficulty	3,849	2,303	2,422	1,371
With an independent living difficulty	6,595	5,832	3,505	3,401
75 years and over				
With any disability	24,139	35,100	16,637	25,509
With a hearing difficulty	13,420	12,597	9,320	9,306
With a vision difficulty	3,613	4,567	1,817	3,316
With a cognitive difficulty	6,839	11,238	4,778	8,378
With an ambulatory difficulty	13,282	24,675	9,412	17,283
With a self-care difficulty	4,788	10,024	3,844	7,103
With an independent living difficulty	9,693	22,244	7,141	17,005

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, tables B18101, B18102, B18103, B18104, B18105, B18106 and B18107
 <<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=disability>> accessed May 17, 2024.

Definitions of Blindness, Deafness, and Deafblindness (with Sources)

BLINDNESS – Medical / Legal Definition

Definition:

- Visual acuity 20/200 or worse in the better eye with best correction
- OR visual field 20 degrees or less in the better eye

Sources:

- Social Security Administration (SSA)
- National Eye Institute (NEI)
- American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO)

BLINDNESS – Functional Definition

Definition:

- Vision cannot be reliably used for reading, navigation, or information access in daily life

Sources:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- U.S. Census – American Community Survey (ACS)

DEAFNESS – Medical Definition

Definition:

- Severe to profound hearing loss
- Typically 70–90+ dB HL
- Speech not reliably understood even with amplification

Sources:

- World Health Organization (WHO)
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)

DEAFNESS – Functional Definition

Definition:

- Spoken communication is not reliably accessible in everyday environments

Sources:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- U.S. Census – American Community Survey (ACS)

DEAFBLINDNESS – Medical Definition

Definition:

- Clinically measurable loss of both vision and hearing

- No single uniform national threshold

Sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)

DEAFBLINDNESS – Functional Definition

Definition:

- Combined vision and hearing loss prevents effective access through either sense alone
- Does not require total blindness or total deafness

Sources:

- Helen Keller National Center (HKNC)
- National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

HB-1995

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 6:30:41 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Peter Fritz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this legislation.

HB-1995

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 10:02:10 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

February 11, 2026

Dearest Honorables Representatives Takayama (Chair), Keohokapu-Lee Loy (Vice Chair), and Members Amato, Hartsfield, Marten, Olds, Takenouchi, Alcos, and Garcia of House Committee on Health (HLT):

I would like to request all of you to support HB1995 relating to parking for persons with disabilities, specifically Deaf-Blind (DB) folks, since it is in conjunction with mobility as by themselves they need aid to be mobile, whether it is an inanimate object such as a cane, pet guide or a human co-navigator. The co-navigator has to juggle ensuring the DB is safe and watching for many obstacles, so regardless of what aid / accommodation(s) the DB person requires, having the handicap parking pass is mandatory for the DB person to be mobile and safely access the facility they need to go to. Please support HB1995.

Thank you for your time and sincerely,

Sherry Shimizu

HB-1995

Submitted on: 2/11/2026 8:49:11 PM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marie Kouthoofd	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Marie Kouthoofd

In Opposition to H.B. 1995

33rd Legislature, Regular Session of 2026

House Committee Hearing on Health (HLT)

Good afternoon Chairs, Vice Chairs, and members.

My name is Marie Kouthoofd, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to H.B. 1995.

This bill would allow blindness or deafness, by itself, to qualify an individual for a disability parking permit. Disability parking has traditionally been based on ambulatory limitation. Being blind or deaf does not automatically mean a person has difficulty walking. Many blind and deaf people move through their communities independently every day without mobility impairments.

A related concern is that the bill does not clearly define blindness, deafness, or deaf-blindness. It does not rely on objective medical thresholds, nor does it establish functional standards tied to walking ability. Instead, eligibility is left largely to subjective judgment, without clear guidance or limits. That lack of definition creates inconsistency in how the law would be applied.

When definitions are this open-ended, the impact is predictable. This bill would exponentially increase the number of disability parking permits issued, not because more people have ambulatory limitations, but because eligibility would be based on sensory disability alone. Disability parking is a limited resource intended for people who have a hard time walking, use wheelchairs, or have other mobility impairments. Expanding eligibility beyond mobility need means permits could be issued to individuals who do not have any ambulatory limitation at all. That undermines the purpose of disability parking.

I served on the Deaf-Blind Task Force. Deaf-blind issues may raise legitimate access questions, and I cannot speak for that community. What I can say is that this broad expansion, combined with vague criteria, raises concerns. It may be useful to convene a stakeholder working group, including Deaf-Blind representatives and the Disability and Communication Access Board, to

iron out these issues and consider more narrowly focused options before making changes of this scope.

I want to address one additional point that often comes up in discussions like this, based on past experience.

As a guide dog user who has traveled with a long cane for over thirty years and now with a guide dog, it is this handler's opinion that guide dog use should not be used as a reason for a disability parking permit. Parking lots can be chaotic and dangerous, but that is true anywhere people travel. Navigation is the responsibility of the handler, using orientation and mobility skills, with the guide dog providing trained assistance within that process. Managing moving cars, backing vehicles, horns, and traffic flow is part of everyday independent travel and does not create a separate mobility justification for disability parking.

I support access and independence for people with disabilities. I also believe disability parking laws should be written to help those who truly need them. For these reasons, I respectfully oppose H.B. 1995 as written.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1995

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 12:20:45 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rodney Kouthoofd	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good morning Chair, Vice Chair, and members.

My name is Rodney Kouthoofd. I'm submitting testimony in opposition to H.B. 1995.

I don't speak for the deaf-blind community. What I can speak to is being married to a blind woman and spending time around the blind community. Blindness alone does not mean someone has difficulty walking.

If we qualified for a disability parking permit under this bill, it would benefit me more than my wife. She travels independently and does not have mobility limitations.

Disability parking should be reserved for people who truly need it because walking is difficult or unsafe for them. Expanding eligibility beyond mobility needs risks taking access away from those who rely on it.

For these reasons, I respectfully oppose H.B. 1995.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony submitted by Katie Keim

house health (HLT) Committee

Thirty-third Legislature, 2026 Regular Session

February 13, 2026, 9:00 am — hearing on HB1995

Good morning Chair, Vice Chair, and Members. I am Katie Keim, a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii submitting testimony in opposition to HB1995 as written.

HB1995 language needs some work in its definition of deaf or blind. Without amendments, I conscientiously cannot support the bill as written.

Government statistics show that using the language “deaf or blind” without defining “deaf or blind” in the bill, will open the door to over 85,000 individuals without an eligibility criteria for persons as is currently written, who have significant walking restrictions and includes specific medical criteria used to determine parking permit eligibility. As written, HB1995 does not change those walking criteria or any other existing eligibility requirements.

As a blind individual, parking the vehicle then walking with a driver is an accomplishable feat, if it is not, my driver drops me and any load I have at the access point of my destination before parking the vehicle and returning.

For the legislators to fully consider this bill, I believe a committee of stakeholders should be established to amend the language to present to the legislation before it is passed.

I oppose HB1995 as written and stand in support of testimony submitted by James Gashel, legislative chair for the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to submit testimony.

HB-1995

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 6:25:15 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joel Cho	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and committee,

The current law is well written and focuses on safety and mobility needs of the individual. This bill would take away the physician's discretion and replace it with a broad brush of vague diagnosis. Supporters of the bill should take a closer look at the actual language of the law.

LATE

HB-1995

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 9:08:09 AM

Testimony for HLT on 2/13/2026 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
ANNETTE TASHIRO	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please do not support this  or SB 2850. I am the spouse of a person who is blind and capable of walking to wherever he needs to after we park our car. He does not need an accessible parking placard. There are so many other people in need of accessible parking. Spare our dignity until our Primary Care Provider tells us that walking is detrimental to our health.