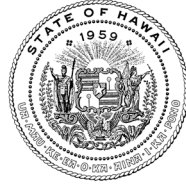


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHAHA

April 6, 2026

To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair,
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Date: Monday, April 6, 2026
Time: 10:32 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 211, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: H.B. 2005 HD2 SD1 RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS

The **DLIR supports** this measure provided it does not conflict with the priorities identified in the Governor's Executive Supplemental Budget request. DLIR will defer to the University of Hawaii (UH) as the lead agency on internal implementation matters and on bill language.

This measure creates a structured pathway to address the need for language interpreters by offering training and paid internship opportunities. These initiatives will help develop bilingual workers to meet the State's language access and workforce needs.

DLIR's Hele Imua program provides residents, including students, with internship opportunities in both public and private sectors. DLIR is prepared to collaborate with UH to offer eligible students work-based learning and workplace exposure through the proposed language access education and workforce development program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.



**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

April 2, 2026

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

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

RE: **HB 2005-HD2-SD1 -- RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS**

HEARING: Monday, April 6, 2026 @ 10:32 am; Conference Room 211

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports HB 2005-HD2-SD1, with comments.

This bill is intended to strengthen language access statewide by creating a structured, workforce-focused pathway to train and recognize qualified translators and interpreters in Hawai'i. By establishing the Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawai'i, combined with ethics and the best practices training, public-service focused instruction, and internship opportunities through the DLIR Hele Imua program, this bill seeks to build a culturally informed bilingual workforce that improves equitable access to critical services like education, health care, social services, law, agriculture, and government.

This bill strengthens Hawai'i's capacity to serve a multilingual population by creating a consistent, statewide pipeline of trained and recognized translators and interpreters. By offering standardized instruction, ethical guidelines, and hands-on internship experience, the program improves the quality and reliability of language services across key service areas. It also supports workforce development by turning biliteracy into meaningful career opportunities for local students and community members.

Thank you for hearing HB 2005-HD2-SD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
April 6, 2026 at 10:32 a.m.

By

Debora Halbert
Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

HB 2005 HD2 SD1 – RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports HB 2005 HD2 SD1– Relating to Language Access. The University of Hawai'i (UH) applauds the efforts of the legislature to build on the success of the Department of Education's Seal of Biliteracy program while striving to address language accessibility issues by creating a mechanism to develop a cadre of qualified translators and interpreters for spoken and written translation efforts. This program would help recognize and deploy the oftentimes untapped talents of many UH students and community members.

Please note that many professional settings (e.g., the court system) have official licensure processes and requirements that exist independently from higher education. As such, while a UH program could award students with a certificate of completion as specified in this measure, in practice, gainful employment as an interpreter will often depend on the attainment of additional credentialing. Additionally, while the focus on ethics, standards, and best practices in interpreter training—as specified in the measure—is commendable, many job placements will also require interpreters to possess highly specialized language proficiency (e.g., health care).

If the intent of this measure is to provide broad community access to interpreter training, we would like to offer the following context and suggestions for your consideration:

- 1) UH Mānoa has the most competitive admissions requirements and the highest tuition and fees in the UH System. While HB 2005 HD2 SD1 states that the program in question shall be administered by the SEED Office at UH Mānoa, this is not an academic unit. We would also like to point out that Kapi'olani Community College (Kapi'olani CC) possesses capacity in the area of interpreter training. Kapi'olani CC has developed a series of non-credit interpreter training courses, including versions focusing on the court system and medical settings. Kapi'olani CC has offered its Medical Interpreting course to two Department of Education high schools (Pearl City and Konawaena) with online components. Additionally, Kapi'olani CC is in the process of (a) developing multi-course, non-

credit stackable pathways in this area and (b) moving these offerings into fully online formats.

- 2) It is currently unclear whether the bill calls for a credit-based program or a non-credit based credential, or both. Non-credit classes, including those offered through UH Mānoa's Outreach College, are typically far less expensive than credit-based coursework, and those wishing to enroll in such classes are not subject to college admissions requirements.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of measure HB 2005 HD2 SD1. This legislative effort to expand the pool of trained translators and interpreters in the workforce to serve our multilingual communities is commendable, as is the opportunity to leverage UH's many excellent language programs.

April 3, 2026

To:

Hawai'i State Legislature, Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair – sendelacruz@capitol.hawaii.gov

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair – senmoriwaki@capitol.hawaii.gov

**Re: Comments on Hawaii HB2005–
Relating to Language Access**

To the Honorable Members of the Committee:

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) wishes to express its appreciation for the opportunity to comment on this pending legislation. NAJIT commends the Hawai'i Legislature for recognizing the importance of language access and for acknowledging translation and interpretation as essential professions in HB2005. Establishing a pathway for bilingual individuals to enter the field is a positive step toward expanding Hawai'i's language access workforce.

Founded in 1978, NAJIT represents more than 1,000 court interpreters, translators, judicial officers, scholars, and trainers dedicated to advancing professional standards and ensuring equal access to justice for individuals who are limited English proficient. NAJIT urges lawmakers and the University of Hawai'i to ensure that any program intended to prepare qualified translators and interpreters reflects the realities of these professions and the standards necessary to protect the public.

While HB2005 outlines a promising framework, several critical components require clarification and strengthening:

1. Generic, English-only training cannot produce competent interpreters or translators

Training in ethics, standards, and best practices is important; however, when delivered generically and without language-specific components, it does not develop the skills required for professional interpreting or translation. These are specialized, performance-based disciplines that require intensive, language-specific practice and feedback.

2. Interpreting and translation are distinct professions

While interpreting (spoken language) and translation (written language) share foundational competencies, they require different cognitive processes, training methods, and assessment tools. Programs must clearly distinguish between the two and provide separate, discipline-appropriate training tracks. Internship opportunities should be available for both disciplines.

3. High-level bilingualism is essential and not universal

Not all bilingual individuals can interpret or translate. Some individuals may have a natural aptitude, others may develop the skills through rigorous, language-specific

training, and some may not acquire these competencies despite extensive effort. Professional interpreting requires advanced language proficiency aligned with ILR Level 3 performance standards, along with specialized skills. Professional translation similarly requires advanced proficiency in both languages and discipline-specific competencies. These cannot be achieved through general bilingualism alone.

4. Language-specific skills training must be delivered by qualified professionals

Students must receive instruction from qualified interpreter and translator trainers with appropriate credentials and professional experience. Without this expertise, programs cannot ensure that trainees acquire the competencies required for high-stakes environments.

5. Specialized, domain-specific instruction is indispensable

Interpreters and translators must develop expertise in specific fields such as law, healthcare, education, social services, and government. These domains require accuracy, confidentiality, and adherence to due process. A generalist curriculum is insufficient preparation.

6. Internships must be supervised by qualified professionals

Internships must be structured, standards-based, and supervised by certified or otherwise qualified professionals. Allowing unsupervised practice creates legal and ethical risks. Until an intern has obtained appropriate certification, a qualified professional should be present to monitor performance, intervene when necessary, and ensure that services provided to the public meet professional standards.

7. Assessment must align with recognized professional benchmarks

Completion of coursework alone does not establish competency. Programs must include assessment mechanisms aligned with nationally recognized proficiency and performance standards to ensure graduates are prepared for professional practice.

8. Educational certificates are not licenses to practice

Educational institutions provide training but do not confer professional certification. A certificate of completion must not be interpreted as equivalent to certification by recognized credentialing bodies such as the American Translators Association, the Hawai'i Judiciary, or the federal courts. Maintaining this distinction is essential to avoid confusion and protect the public.

NAJIT strongly supports Hawai'i's goal of expanding language access and building a robust bilingual workforce. We stand ready to collaborate with the University of Hawai'i, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and other stakeholders to strengthen the program envisioned in this legislation.

Our organization brings decades of expertise in professional standards, ethics, training, and assessment. We welcome the opportunity to support the development of a program that ensures high-quality, accurate, and ethically grounded language access services for Hawai'i's communities.

We appreciate the Legislature's leadership on this important issue and thank you for the opportunity to provide input. We are available to provide additional information or to collaborate further as this legislation moves forward.

Respectfully submitted,
The NAJIT Board of Directors

For additional information or clarification, please contact NAJIT at office@najit.org

cc:

Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, senelefante@capitol.hawaii.gov

Senator Carol Fukunaga, senfukunaga@capitol.hawaii.gov

Senator Rachele Fernandez Lamosoa, senlamosao@capitol.hawaii.gov

Senator Chris Lee, senlee@capitol.hawaii.gov

Senator Joy A. Buenaventura, sensanbuenaventura@capitol.hawaii.gov

Senator Glenn Wakai, senwakai@capitol.hawaii.gov

Representative Greggor Ilagan, repilagan@capitol.hawaii.gov

Debra Halbert, Vice President for Academic Strategy, University of Hawaii System,
halbert@hawaii.edu

May Mizuno, Executive Director, Office of Language Access, doh.ola@doh.hawaii.gov

Debi S. Tulang-DeSilva, Administrator, Office on Equality and Access to the Courts, Office of
the Administrative Director of the Courts, oeac@courts.hawaii.gov

Brooke Bogue, Manager, Language Access Services Section, National Center for State Courts,
bbogue@ncsc.org

NAJIT Advocacy Committee, advocacy@najit.org

Endorsed by:

American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education (AAITE)

Association of Language Companies (ALC)

American Translators Association (ATA)

Certification Commission for Health Care Interpreters (CCHI)

Canadian Language Industry Association (CLIA) / Association canadienne de l'industrie de la
langue (ACIL)

National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC)

HB-2005-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 1:46:24 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Testifying for The Kegal Clinic	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Amy Agbayani, President of The Legal Clinic Hawai'i, a non-profit community organization providing legal representation and assistance to low-income immigrants and families and emeritus director of UH Manoa student diversity services

I strongly endorse HB2005 for it will increase language access, meet academic educational objectives, develop workforce and career opportunities needed in our community. Our constitution and our community must acknowledge the contributions, rights, responsibilities of all people in our community My testimony in support of this bill is informed by being an immigrant myself and working with immigrant communities, DOE, UH, government agencies and community groups.

Our state population is diverse, with 18% foreign-born population who come from many countries including Canada and Mexico. The majority of immigrants are from Asia and the Pacific; and 50% of immigrants are from the Philippines. Hawai'i immigrants contribute billions to the state GDP--paying taxes, creating businesses, staffing essential jobs--while often being paid very low wages and lacking. access to social benefits.

Hawai'i has one of the highest per-capita rates of limited English proficient persons ("LEP persons") in the nation. Of the State's population, 348,139 persons (or around 1 in 4) speak a language other than. English at home and 161,055 residents or 1 in 9 speak English "less than very well," and counted as limited English proficient speakers (LEP). Languages spoken by Hawai'i foreign born communities include Ilokano, Tagalog. Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Samoan, Tonga, Micronesian, Pohnpeian, Marshallese and Chuukese, Communicating in the languages they understand is critical to their ability to access services and resources. Foreign-born residents and Hawai'i residents from the U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands experience severe barriers to active participation in the community. LEP are a disadvantaged and vulnerable sector of the community with limited access to information and resources. Many have no information on government services, have limited English proficiency, experience prejudice, cultural misunderstanding and unable to receive government and community resources. We have talented students and faculty to support Hawai'i and the mmigrant community that is under attack.

This bill will help the state develop workers to assist LEP in our state receive services to meet equal access mandates. Government, private companies and non-profit organizations need persons who are qualified to provide language access. For example, my own organization, The

Legal Clinic depends on services of lawyers and other staff who can communicate with clients detained at the Federal Detention Center. Translators and interpreters were needed after the fires in Lahaina, a community with 30% foreign-born, 40% Filipino and a significant percentage LEP.

UH and DOE have significant students who can speak or are learning to speak languages in addition to English who may be interested and eligible for this program. UH has faculty and student services to implement a Language Access Education and Workforce development program but needs additional resources to provide training for students from any of the campuses. UH already has experience working effectively with internships from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. This program provides a pathway to jobs and careers to serve our state.

I commend the DOE for providing not only instruction to teach English as a second language to foreign born children, but to programs to certify competence in English and 'Olelo Hawai'i and English and a foreign or community language (e.g. Spanish, Ilokano, Japanese). In addition, UH offers numerous classes, including four-year and graduate level courses in various languages. These students at UH campuses will be eligible to increase their language skills and obtain training, internships and other educational opportunities in translation and interpretation. Students participants in the language education and workforce development program can be from any campus, any academic major and become qualified to work with limited English proficient persons. Many occupations and professionals can benefit from having these bilingual skills and training (Health care professionals, Lawyers, Social Workers, Emergency responders, Police, tourism staff), a major. Both government and private organizations need trained bilingual workers to serve the large number of LEP.

I respectfully urge the Committee approve this bill because it help the state meet community needs, mandates for language access and supports DOE UH educational and workforce development objectives.



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2005, HD2, SD1
RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS**

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair

Sen. Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: April 6, 2026 | Letter Date: April 5, 2026

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic (TLC) strongly supports HB2005, HD2, SD1 which establishes a statewide language access education and workforce development program at the University of Hawai'i. TLC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing immigrant justice in Hawai'i through immigration legal services, community education, and policy advocacy. Ensuring equitable access to justice and public services for individuals with limited English proficiency is central to our mission and to the well-being of the communities we serve.

Language barriers remain a significant obstacle for many immigrants and migrants in Hawai'i. Limited access to qualified interpretation and translation services can prevent individuals from understanding their legal rights, accessing public safety protections, and meaningfully engaging with government agencies. These barriers often result in delayed or denied access to critical services, misunderstandings in legal proceedings, and reduced trust in public institutions.

HB2005, HD2, SD1 offers a sustainable solution to these challenges. Research and national best practices consistently demonstrate that increased language access improves outcomes in legal and public safety settings. Accurate and culturally competent interpretation reduces miscommunication, promotes procedural fairness, and supports due process. Strengthening language access also enhances public safety by encouraging individuals to report crimes and cooperate with investigations without fear that language barriers will prevent them from being understood or treated fairly.

HB2005, HD2, SD1's focus on workforce development is well-aligned with community needs. Collaboration with public service agencies and community organizations will help ensure that training reflects real-world service demands. At TLC, much of our legal services work depends on third-party interpreters, and we anticipate continued demand for these language services in the years ahead. We particularly encourage recruitment and training of interpreters with specialized knowledge of legal terminology and understanding of the unique and often sensitive circumstances faced by immigrants, refugees, and survivors of crime navigating the legal system.

HB2005, HD2, SD1 represents an important investment in fairness, access to justice, and the effectiveness of Hawai'i's public service systems. We appreciate the Legislature's commitment to language access and look forward to supporting the successful implementation of this important initiative.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of The Legal Clinic
and Board President Amy Agbayani,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Sablan', written in a cursive style.

Christina Sablan
Community & Policy Advocate



April 5, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **HB2005 HD2 SD1**, Relating to Language Access

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Llasmin Chaine, LSW, Executive Director, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB2005 HD2 SD1**, Relating to Language Access

Hearing: Monday, April 6, 2026, 10:32 a.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women **supports HB2005 HD2 SD1**, which establishes a statewide Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawaii.

As a statewide feminist government body dedicated to advancing equality for women and girls, the Commission recognizes that **language access is a critical component of equity and inclusion**. Many women and girls across our state face barriers to education, employment, and vital services due to language obstacles. This bill's focus on language access directly aligns with our mission to **dismantle systemic barriers** that disproportionately affect women and girls across the diaspora, supporting legislative measures that **enable economic self-sufficiency**.

By investing in language access education and workforce development, the proposed program will help build a pipeline of qualified professionals equipped to serve Hawaii's linguistically diverse population. Women are often primary caregivers and community navigators, and improved access to interpretation and translation services can reduce disparities in healthcare, legal, and social services. The bill's focus on workforce development also aligns with the Commission's commitment to economic empowerment, as it may open **new career pathways** for women interested in language access professions.

We respectfully urge this Committee to **pass HB2005 HD2 SD1**, advancing equity and investing in workforce development.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.



COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

HEARING:
Monday, April 6, 2026 at 10:32 am
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2005, HD2, SD1 - RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Senators Hashimoto and DeCoite of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Veronica Mendoza, Founding Executive Director of Roots Reborn and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui - The People in Action Maui. Roots Reborn **strongly supports HB 2005, HD2, SD1**, Relating to Language Access, which establishes a statewide language access education and workforce development program at the University of Hawaii, establishes positions and appropriates funds.

Roots Reborn is a grassroots, multicultural immigrant-justice and disaster-response organization serving migrant and immigrant communities on Maui and beyond. Born out of the August 2023 wildfires, we immediately stepped in to move aid, navigate systems alongside families, and build the trusted relationships that still anchor our work today. What began as wildfire response has grown into essential infrastructure for immigrant communities facing overlapping crises—from recovery and housing instability to shifting federal policies, increased enforcement, and rising fear.

In our work we have identified risks to our community presented by unnecessary barriers, such as the current significant unmet need for qualified bilingual assistance. In our work helping Maui wildfire survivors navigate disaster recovery, health care, and legal representation, we have identified lack of qualified bilingual assistance as a significant barrier. At the time of the wildfires, about one-third of Lahaina residents were foreign born, and 36% aged five and older spoke a language other than English at home. Roots Reborn has helped close some of the gap with disaster management and legal program language assistance. However, the need for bilingual assistance, especially for mental health and physical health treatment, is preventing survivors from receiving the care that they need to recover from the disaster. This is why HB 2005, HD2, SD1 is so greatly needed.

House Bill 2005, HD2, SD1, creates a pathway to increase Hawai'i's language access workforce by drawing upon our existing communities. It supports multilingual students by creating training opportunities, career experience, and professional pathways to become trained, qualified interpreters/translators and bilingual professionals. Being bilingual is not the same as being trained to interpret or translate. Professional language access requires specialized skills, confidentiality standards, and ethics. Establishing a statewide program helps ensure language access is competent, ethical, and consistent. We **urge you to support HB 2005, HD2, SD1** and to vote to pass it out of this committee.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Mendoza', written in a cursive style.

Veronica Mendoza

Maui Roots Reborn, *Founding Executive Director*
El Pueblo en Accion Maui, *Founding Coalition Member*

HB-2005-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/3/2026 4:38:05 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carolyn Weygan-Hildebrand	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Greetings!

I strongly support this measure. Hawai'i's multilingual population is an inherent public asset. In a state where linguistic diversity reflects generations of migration, cultural continuity, and community knowledge, multilingual capacity should be seen not only as a need for accommodation but also as a strength that can be intentionally developed for public benefit.

This measure appropriately recognizes that bilingual and biliterate students, including those who have earned the Seal of Biliteracy, represent an important workforce pipeline for translation and interpretation services in education, health care, social services, legal services, agriculture, and government. By creating structured pathways into these professions, the bill affirms that language competency has civic, economic, and institutional value.

The involvement of core language programs of our public university should be clearer. The largest language programs to my knowledge are the UHM's Indo-Pacific Languages and East Asian Languages and Literature programs. They would be where the State will find the most language educators within the UH system. For the pipeline to be viable, these programs need to be tied more intimately with the development of a robust translation and interpretation workforce and "industry."

Mahalo.

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Monday, April 6, 2026 at 10:32 am
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2005, HD2, SD1 - RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Senator Hashimoto for my district, Senator DeCoite of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui. I am also an attorney licensed in the state of Hawaii for over 25 years and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui — The People in Action Maui. Earlier in my career I was also certified by the Japanese government in level one Japanese language interpretation. I am writing in **strong support of HB 2005, HD2, SD1**, Relating to Language Access, which establishes a statewide language access education and workforce development program at the University of Hawaii, establishes positions and appropriates funds.

Early in my career, I was the founding Program Manager of the Maui Economic Development Board's Women in Technology Project, where I worked on equity in STEM as a workforce development issue for many years, and wrote over ten peer-reviewed papers on best practices in the field. In that capacity, I identified barriers to workforce development, those elements in the training to workforce pipeline that led to shortages of skilled workers, especially in our neighbor island community. As a volunteer with El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui — The People in Action Maui, I have also witnessed how the unmet need for bilingual assistance impacts our community as a whole, with people unable to access legal services, health care resources, and social services as the result of lack of language access.

It is important to note that trained, qualified interpreters with appropriate skills, confidentiality standards, and ethics are very needed. I remember when I was a volunteer with the Family Court Monitoring Project some years ago, observing an interaction between the court and a Japanese national visitor, who was before the court on charges of domestic violence. A staff member of the hotel where he was staying served as his "interpreter" for the day. This was not appropriate, as she was not a trained or qualified interpreter for courtroom work. I witnessed the court ask a question of the accused and the hotel staff interpret the court's question. I also witnessed the accused make *extremely* inappropriate statements in Japanese in response berating the court, making statements intimating that the victim "deserved it", and that being in court as a result of the alleged abuse was nonsense. I then witnessed the hotel staff give a completely different interpretation than what the man said. She was very polite, apologetic, and deferential to the court. I hoped that the court picked up on the man's body language, tone, and facial expression and recognized that the interpretation was inaccurate.

This experience of witnessing such inaccurate and inappropriate interpretation in front of a family court judge in a case of domestic violence was shocking to me. I hope that it highlights for the Committee the importance of the goals of HB 2005, HD2, SD1 to provide professionally trained interpreters. I request that you support language access and **vote in support of HB 2005, HD2 SD1**.

Mahalo for all you do for your constituents and community,

Christine Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

Testimony In **SUPPORT** of **HB2005 HD2 SD1**

Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: April 6, 2026

Dear Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and members of the Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Jeremiah Brown, and I submit this testimony in **support of HB2005 HD2 SD1**, which establishes a statewide Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawai‘i and appropriates funds for the program.

In my role as an educator, I work closely with multilingual students and their families. I have also run student translator programs at my school. Through these experiences, I have seen firsthand both the incredible linguistic assets our students bring to their schools and communities and the real need for structured training, ethical guidance, and clear pathways into professional language access work.

A teacher at Kealakahe High School has also been running a student translator program for several years, demonstrating that there is a talent pool for this kind of work and that there are programs in place that can be built on to create a pipeline of students interested in careers in interpretation and translation.

In each of the past three years, over 100 students have graduated from Waipahu High School with the Seal of Biliteracy. These students demonstrate high levels of proficiency in English and at least one additional language, and many already serve informally as translators and interpreters for their families, attending doctor’s appointments, helping fill out forms, and even filing tax returns. While their willingness to help is admirable and often necessary, they shouldn’t be placed in those roles as a qualified, trained interpreter or translator would be more appropriate.

HB2005 HD2 SD1 directly addresses this need, a need that was made clear during the pandemic and the aftermath of the Maui wildfires. By creating a structured, statewide program that builds on the Seal of Biliteracy and provides training and paid internship opportunities, this bill validates students’ linguistic skills while also protecting the communities they serve. It transforms what is currently informal, uneven, and often uncompensated labor into a professional pathway that benefits both students and the State of Hawai‘i.

This bill also sends the important message that students’ home languages and cultural knowledge are strengths that are valued, needed, and worthy of investment. For many multilingual students, especially those from immigrant families, this recognition can be life-changing. It connects school success to meaningful career opportunities and directly supports Hawai‘i’s language access obligations across state agencies.

From my experience in schools, I can say with confidence that there is both student interest and workforce need for a program like the one proposed in HB2005 HD2 SD1. My school alone

sends out dozens of multilingual graduates into the workforce every year. This bill builds on existing successes, such as the Seal of Biliteracy, and thoughtfully extends them into higher education and workforce development.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support HB2005 HD2 SD1. Mahalo for your time, your consideration, and your continued commitment to equity, access, and opportunity for Hawai'i's diverse communities.

Respectfully,

Jeremiah Brown
Multilingual Learners program coordinator
Waipahu High School

HB-2005-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 10:32:01 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/6/2026 10:32:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ana Laura Flores-Garcia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ana Flores, a Manoa resident and I am writing in strong support of HB2005 HD2 SD1.

Limited English proficiency can prevent individuals from fully understanding their rights and accessing essential government services, including law enforcement and the courts. Strong language access programs are critical to ensuring fairness and effective administration of justice.

As a multilingual speaker myself, I have experienced firsthand how language can open doors—educationally, professionally, and personally. Those opportunities have shaped my life, and now, as a mother raising two bilingual children, I hope those same doors remain open for them. Their language skills are not a barrier; they are an asset that deserves recognition, support, and investment.

In my previous role as the director of a nonprofit organization supporting first-generation students in their journey to higher education, I saw clear patterns of success. Students who were bilingual often demonstrated stronger academic resilience, adaptability, and confidence. When their language abilities were valued rather than discouraged, they were more likely to persist, succeed, and give back to their communities.

Maintaining one’s mother tongue is especially important. Numerous studies show that bilingualism enhances cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and long-term academic achievement. Preserving a child’s first language also strengthens family bonds, cultural identity, and mental well-being. When systems encourage bilingualism instead of assimilation at the cost of language loss, communities thrive.

HB2005’s focus on workforce development is especially critical. Our state needs trained interpreters and culturally competent professionals in sensitive settings such as police encounters, courtrooms, schools, and other protected areas. Investing in this workforce not only improves public safety and access to justice—it signals that Hawai’i values linguistic diversity as a strength.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support HB2005 HD2 SD1. This measure moves us closer to a more equitable, inclusive, and effective system for all who call Hawai'i home.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

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