



**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

February 24, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

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

RE: **HB 2622-HD1 -- RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS**

HEARING: Friday, February 27, 2026 @ 10:00 am; Conference Room 308

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

SHPDA strongly supports HB 2622-HD1 with comments.

HB 2622-HD1 funds the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) to expand bilingual resources and services so residents with limited English proficiency can receive—and act on—critical emergency information in real time.

From a health system standpoint, language access during disasters is a core safety function. When evacuation orders, shelter rules, medication guidance, and assistance instructions are not understood, the predictable result is preventable injury, delayed care, missed reunification, and avoidable emergency department utilization, especially for older adults, migrant workers, and mixed-status families. On Maui and across our neighbor islands, these risks concentrate in communities that already face barriers to primary care, transportation, and stable housing.

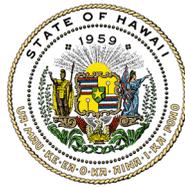
HIEMA's own language access planning framework considers a dedicated Limited English Proficiency Specialist function to coordinate compliance, training, vendor support, and reporting. HB 2622-HD1 should therefore include sufficient, explicit funding for a permanent position and consideration towards working with trusted community organizations working with these non-English proficient populations. Trust is a key factor in emergency situations, and these organizations have done much of the groundwork already to establish these relationships.

For these reasons, SHPDA supports HB 2622-HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



STEPHEN F. LOGAN
MAJOR GENERAL
ADJUTANT GENERAL
KA 'AKUKANA KENELALA

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
KAHU HO'OMALU PŪLIA

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
4204 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96816-4420

STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2622 HD1,
RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

February 27, 2026

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) strongly **SUPPORTS** House Bill 2622 HD1, which appropriates critical resources to expand bilingual services and improve language access for residents with limited English proficiency (LEP). This measure directly strengthens statewide emergency preparedness, life-safety communications, and civil rights compliance.

During emergencies, language accessibility can mean the difference between life and death. When HIEMA issues warnings, evacuation guidance, or disaster recovery instructions, communication delays or misunderstanding among LEP communities significantly increase vulnerability—especially for kupuna, newly arrived immigrants, and low-income families.

The bill correctly notes that HIEMA has only one language coordinator to serve a linguistically diverse statewide population. Without enhanced capacity, the State risks not only service gaps but also noncompliance with federal requirements tied to grants, contracts, and emergency management partnerships.

House Bill 2622 HD1 provides dedicated resources to expand HIEMA's bilingual capabilities and build a more robust, multi-agency language access network. These resources directly support:

- Faster, more accurate dissemination of lifesaving information
- Improved equity for LEP populations in preparedness, response, and recovery
- Strengthened community trust and engagement
- Increased operational efficiency through standardized translated materials
- Greater alignment with statewide equity priorities

We respectfully request inclusion of standard budgetary proviso language to ensure this appropriation aligns with the Governor's fiscal priorities and statewide budget planning.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide support testimony and for your continued commitment to community safety.

James Barros: james.barros@hawaii.gov; 808-733-4300



HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

KOMIKINA PONO KĪWILA O HAWAI‘I

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411, HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: (808) 586-8636 · FAX: (808) 586-8655 · TDD: (808) 586-8692

DATE: Friday, February 27, 2026
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Conference Room 308
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

To:

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

From: Alphonso Braggs, Chair
and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: HB 2622 Relating to Language Access
Testimony in SUPPORT

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5. HCRC has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment (Chapter 378, Part I, HRS), housing (Chapter 515, HRS), public accommodations (Chapter 489, HRS), and access to state and state-funded services (HRS § 368-1.5). Through this broad jurisdiction, the HCRC ensures that the constitutional promise of nondiscrimination is not merely aspirational, but actively protected in the daily lives of Hawai‘i’s people.

The HCRC is in strong support of HB 2622 HD1 because Hawai'i's population is proudly diverse. Nearly one in five individuals is born outside the United States.¹ Additionally, nearly twenty-five percent of Hawai'i's population speaks a language other than English at home.²

The Maui wildfires in 2023 exposed shortcomings in Hawai'i's emergency response systems, specifically, timely and accurate information can determine whether families evacuate safely, access shelters, or receive life-saving assistance. During emergencies, access to important information is critical and could be the difference between life and death. Delays in vital information during emergencies could effectively constitute a denial of communication, as time is of the essence. Speakers of languages other than English and individuals with disabilities need equal access to such information.

While the legislature passed Act 210, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2024, which established a language access coordinator within the Hawai'i emergency management system, H.B. 2622 HD1 recognizes the unmet needs of two hundred and sixty thousand foreign-born individuals in communicating critical information in the event of an emergency. The immigrant population is essential to Hawai'i's workforce, economy, and community. H.B. 2622 HD1 would ensure equitable access to alerts, warnings, and disaster assistance and strengthen compliance with federal and state civil rights requirements.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Foreign Born Persons, Percent 2020-2024*, 17.9%, last accessed February 25, 2026 at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/Hi#>

² Research and Economic Analysis Division, DBEDT, *Detailed Languages Spoken at Home in the State of Hawai'i* (March 2016), last accessed on February 25, 2026 at https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/census/acs/Report/Detailed_Language_March2016.pdf



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2622, HD1 - RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS

Committee on Finance

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: February 27, 2026 | Conference Room 308 | Letter Date: February 25, 2026

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic (TLC) is a nonprofit community organization providing legal representation and assistance to low-income immigrants and families. Our mission is to advance justice for all immigrants in Hawai'i through legal services, education, and advocacy. We strongly endorse HB2622, HD1, which will increase language access capacity to support HIEMA's mission.

Our community recognizes the contributions, rights, and responsibilities of all people, including persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). Our testimony in support of this bill is informed by both lived and professional experience. Many TLC staff and board members, including TLC's President, are immigrants ourselves. We draw from our own experiences as immigrants and from our work with immigrant communities, government agencies, and immigrant-serving organizations across the state, including in times of crisis and recovery – from the Lahaina fires to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hawai'i's population is diverse, with 18% of residents foreign-born, coming from countries including Canada, Mexico, Japan, and many others. The majority of immigrants are from Asia and the Pacific with nearly 50% from the Philippines. Immigrants in Hawai'i contribute billions of dollars to the state GDP - paying taxes, creating businesses, and staffing essential jobs - while often earning low wages and lacking access to social benefits.

Hawai'i has one of the highest per-capita rates of LEP persons in the nation. Approximately 348,139 residents - about 1 in 4 - speak a language other than English at home. An estimated 161,055 residents, or 1 in 9, speak English "less than very well," and are considered LEP. Some of the common languages spoken by Hawai'i's foreign-born communities include Cantonese, Chuukese, Ilocano, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Marshallese, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog, and Tongan.

Communicating in the languages people understand is essential to their ability to access services and resources. Many foreign-born residents including those from the U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands experience severe barriers to full participation in the community. LEP individuals are a disadvantaged and vulnerable sector of the community with limited access to information and resources. Many lack information on government services, experience prejudice and cultural misunderstanding, and are unable to receive government and community resources due to language barriers.

This bill will help HIEMA and other government agencies ensure that LEP persons in our state receive services and that language access mandates are met. Government, private companies and nonprofit organizations need qualified personnel to provide language access, especially in times of emergency. Translators and interpreters were needed after the fires in Lahaina, a community with 30% foreign-born residents, 40% Filipino, and a significant LEP population. The recent weather emergency announcement should have been available in multiple languages to ensure safety with assistance from government agencies.

HIEMA coordinates and has partnerships with other agencies, including health services, before, during, and after emergencies. Strengthening language access capacity within HIEMA is therefore critical to providing equitable and effective emergency response statewide.

We respectfully request your support for HB2622, HD1 to ensure meaningful language access for community members with limited English proficiency. Access to essential services should never depend on the language someone speaks. Passing this bill affirms Hawai'i's commitment to equity, inclusion, and public safety for all.

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



Christina Sablan
Community & Policy Advocate

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 9:34:56 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Matthew B. Johnson	Pacific Gateway Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Pacific Gateway Center

In SUPPORT of HB2622 HD1

Committee on Finance

Representative Chris Todd, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Feb 27, 2026

Dear Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Matthew Johnson, the Executive Director for Pacific Gateway Center, and I submit this testimony in support of HB2622 HD1, which appropriates funds for the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

Pacific Gateway Center is a Hawai'i-based nonprofit dedicated to empowering immigrants, refugees, and underserved communities through workforce development, small business

support, and agricultural programs that promote economic self-sufficiency and food security. As part of this mission, Pacific Gateway Center operates Hawai'i Language Bank, which provides professional translation and interpretation services to individuals, businesses, and government agencies. These language services ensure meaningful access to critical resources, reduce barriers for limited-English-proficient residents, and promote equity by enabling full participation in legal, medical, educational, and economic opportunities across Hawai'i.

HB2622 HD1 is important because emergency preparedness and response only work when people can understand alerts, instructions, and recovery resources. In disasters and emergencies, language access is a life-safety issue—evacuation orders, shelter information, health guidance, and aid applications must be accessible to all residents, not only those who speak English.

By funding HI-EMA's bilingual resources and services, this bill helps ensure timely, accurate communication and equitable access to emergency response and recovery support. It will reduce confusion and delays, strengthen public trust and compliance with emergency directives, and help ensure that all communities in Hawai'i can stay informed and safe during emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee PASS HB2622 HD1 and fully fund the appropriation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Matthew B. Johnson

Pacific Gateway Center

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Barbara Tom, and I am the Director of the Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center. I submit this testimony in strong support HB2622 HD1 relating to appropriations for the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to increase to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Waipahu Safe Haven serves immigrant and migrant families in Waipahu, many from Compact of Free Association (COFA) communities and other Pacific Island and Asian immigrant populations. A significant portion of the families we work with are limited English proficient and rely heavily on translated information and trusted community messengers to understand critical public updates.

In times of natural disaster, wildfire, flooding, public health emergencies, or other crises, access to accurate and timely information can be a matter of life and death. When emergency alerts, evacuation notices, shelter information, and recovery resources are not accessible in language, LEP families are placed at disproportionate risk.

This measure is essential because it:

- Strengthens equitable access to emergency alerts and preparedness information
- Improves public safety outcomes for linguistically diverse communities
- Reduces confusion and misinformation during crisis situations
- Builds trust between emergency management agencies and immigrant communities

We have seen firsthand how language barriers can delay evacuation, prevent families from accessing shelters, or create fear and hesitation in seeking government assistance after a disaster. Many immigrant and migrant families also rely on community-based organizations like ours to interpret emergency information—capacity that should be strengthened at the state level.

Appropriating funds to expand bilingual resources, translation capacity, and culturally competent outreach is not simply a language access issue—it is a public safety and disaster resilience issue.

Waipahu is one of the most densely populated communities in Hawai'i, with many families living in multi-unit housing complexes. Ensuring that all residents—regardless of language proficiency—receive clear, accessible emergency information protects the entire community.

Waipahu Safe Haven respectfully urges you to PASS HB2622 HD1

Sincerely,
Barbara Tom
Director
Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center

Phone 808-392-5946



COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:
Friday, February 27, 2026 at 10:00 am
Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference
State Capitol

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2622, HD1, RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Rep. Miyake and Rep. Yamashita 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 2622, HD1**, Relating to Language Access, which appropriates funds for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

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 2622, HD1 is so greatly needed.

As a Maui-based disaster-response organization serving migrant and immigrant communities, the appropriation of funds for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency is necessary, timely, and responsive to community needs. We **urge you to support HB 2622, HD1** 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*



www.hicir.org | Instagram @hicir
hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com

Testimony of Liza Ryan-Gill

In SUPPORT of HB2622 HD1

Committee on Finance

Representative Chris Todd, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: February 27, 2026

Hearing Time/Place: 10:00 AM, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Liza Ryan-Gill, and I submit this **testimony in support of HB2622 HD1**, which appropriates funds for the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency (LEP). I am testifying on behalf of the Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR). Our coalition works with immigrant, refugee, and other limited-English-proficient communities across Hawai‘i, and we see firsthand that language access determines whether families receive timely information, understand what to do, and are able to recover after emergencies.

HB2622 HD1 is important because emergency preparedness and response only work when people can understand alerts, instructions, and recovery resources. During disasters, language barriers can be life-threatening: LEP residents may miss evacuation orders, shelter locations, health advisories, or critical aid instructions. Investing in HI-EMA’s bilingual resources strengthens statewide preparedness by ensuring emergency information reaches everyone—not only English speakers. It also reduces confusion, misinformation, and delays in response and recovery; builds trust so residents are more likely to follow directives and seek help early; and improves equitable access to recovery support, including navigating FEMA guidance, state programs, and vital documents.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee PASS HB2622 HD1 and fully fund the appropriation. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Liza Ryan Gill

Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)

Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: House Committee on Finance
Re: **HB2622 HD1 – Relating to Language Access**
Hawai'i State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 27, 2026, 10:00 AM

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB2622 HD1**. This bill would appropriate funds for the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency (LEP).

During the pandemic, non-profit organizations like ours worked hard to help 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, we again found a lack of resources to address the language needs of Hawai'i's residents, causing many of 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 devote more resources than most other states do to ensure language access to essential government services. This bill would be a great step in that direction.

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

Sincerely,

Malia Tsuchiya
Early Childhood Policy and Advocacy Coordinator

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://hawaiiidxp.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/>

**Testimony of Terrina Wong
In SUPPORT of HB2622**

Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Feb 27, 2026

Dear Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Terrina Wong and I submit this testimony in support of HB 2622, a bill that appropriates funds for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

I retired as the Deputy Director of Immigration and Social Services at Pacific Gateway Center. I served as Chair of the Language Access Advisory Council of the Office of Language Access and also served on many ad hoc language access committees during Covid-19 and the Maui Wildfires. I was authorized to conduct immigration legal services as an Accredited Representative with the Department of Justice for Pacific Gateway Center since 2018 to ensure access to justice for low-income immigrants requiring the need for interpreters and translators to support a more effective pursuit of immigration benefits.

I am testifying as an individual and I am pleased to offer this testimony on behalf of myself as a civically engaged and concerned individual citizen for the well-being of our entire community.

Language access is not a luxury—it is foundational to social justice to ensure equitable access to programs, services and opportunities in education, healthcare, legal services, and emergency government programs. In a state as diverse as Hawaii, our multilingual population is one of our greatest strengths; however, this strength can only be realized when we bridge the communication gap with a trained, culturally competent workforce and resources.

HB2622 responds to what we learn from every major natural disaster such as the Maui wildfires, hurricanes, storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods that have adversely impacted our community as well as human-caused events such as acts of terrorism or pandemics; that is, the State of Hawaii could not satisfactorily meet the needs of our multilingual, multicultural community.

Pandemics and wildfires do not discriminate, and neither should our methods, resources and ways of communication for the 20% of Hawaii residents who are foreign-born and disproportionately at-risk due to the language barrier.

We must find ways to ensure our community who speaks English “less than very well” has access to good and trusted information. During a time of crisis, effective communication is critical for the safety and well-being of the people of our state. All Hawaiian values and norms of aloha, mālama, ‘ohana, kokua, kuleana must drive the intent and purpose of HB2622.

I urge you to support this measure that ensures equitable resources to all residents in our community. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Terrina Wong

To: Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: February 25, 2026

RE: House Bill 2622 HD1
Measure Title: RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.
Report Title: Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency; Limited English
Proficiency; Language Access; Appropriation (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support House Bill 2622 HD1. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 9:52:21 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kanani Kai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2622.

Mahalo,

Kanani Kai

Member Indivisible Hawaii

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 10:14:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nandita Sharma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of HB2622. It is crucial for everyone that everyone has access to bilingual resources so that crucial services and entitlements are available for residents with limited English proficiency. To not do so is not only discriminatory but is also detrimental to the well-being of everyone in society.

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 6:06:26 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyce Dodge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Alyce Dodge, and I submit this testimony in **support of HB2622 HD1**, which appropriates funds for the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

I am an educator at a Hawaii public school with a good sized population of immigrant families and English Language Learners.

HB2622 HD1 is important because emergency preparedness and response only work when people can understand alerts, instructions, and recovery resources. In disasters and emergencies, language access is a life-safety issue—evacuation orders, shelter information, health guidance, and aid applications must be accessible to all residents, not only those who speak English.

By funding HI-EMA’s bilingual resources and services, this bill helps ensure timely, accurate communication and equitable access to emergency response and recovery support. It will reduce confusion and delays, strengthen public trust and compliance with emergency directives, and help ensure that all communities in Hawai‘i can stay informed and safe during emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB2622 HD1** and fully fund the appropriation.

Mahalo,

Alyce Dodge

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 6:13:02 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Olivia Manayan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Olivia Manayan, MD

In SUPPORT of HB2622 HD1

Committee on Finance

Representative Chris Todd, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Feb 27, 2026

Dear Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Dr. Olivia Manayan, and I submit this testimony in **support of HB2622 HD1**, which appropriates funds for the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

I am an OB/GYN serving patients across the state. I am testifying as an individual. For patients where English is not a first language, being able to access resources in their native language can not only help to promote a safe, inclusive environment, but can also increase accessibility for people who already face barriers to navigate new systems and cultures.

HB2622 HD1 is important because emergency preparedness and response only work when people can understand alerts, instructions, and recovery resources. In disasters and emergencies, language access is a life-safety issue—evacuation orders, shelter information, health guidance, and aid applications must be accessible to all residents, not only those who speak English.

By funding HI-EMA's bilingual resources and services, this bill helps ensure timely, accurate communication and equitable access to emergency response and recovery support. It will reduce confusion and delays, strengthen public trust and compliance with emergency directives, and help ensure that all communities in Hawai'i can stay informed and safe during emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB2622 HD1** and fully fund the appropriation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Olivia Manayan, MD MPH
Obstetrics & Gynecology
Honolulu, HI

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 6:57:01 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Judith Mura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

STRONGLY SUPPORT HB2622 HD1

Testimony In SUPPORT of HB2622 HD1

Committee on Finance

Representative Chris Todd, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Feb 27, 2026

Dear Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Jeremiah Brown, and I submit this testimony in **support of HB2622 HD1**, which appropriates funds for the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

As a teacher who works closely with multilingual students and their families, I have seen the importance of timely, accurate information during emergencies. During the pandemic, it became clear that we as a state needed to do better at distributing information to the community in languages other than English. Complicated quarantine policies were not clearly communicated and families sent their children to school when they should have stayed home. Parents who lost their jobs were unable to apply for unemployment insurance. Consent forms for vaccination clinics at schools were only available in English. We should learn from our experience with the pandemic and the Maui wildfires to avoid these kinds of issues in the future.

HB2622 HD1 is important because emergency preparedness and response only work when people can understand alerts, instructions, and recovery resources. In disasters and emergencies, language access is a life-safety issue—evacuation orders, shelter information, health guidance, and aid applications must be accessible to all residents, not only those who speak English.

By funding HI-EMA's bilingual resources and services, this bill helps ensure timely, accurate communication and equitable access to emergency response and recovery support. It will reduce confusion and delays, strengthen public trust and compliance with emergency directives, and help ensure that all communities in Hawai'i can stay informed and safe during emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB2622 HD1** and fully fund the appropriation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Jeremiah Brown
Waialua, Oahu

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 7:33:08 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

As a taxpaying citizen and child of immigrants, I write in strong **support of HB2622 HD1**, which appropriates funds for the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

As we have learned from the still recent Maui wildfires, emergency response and preparedness is essential to keep local communities and families safe. HB2622 HD1 is an important investment for Hawai'i because emergency preparedness and response only work when people can understand alerts, instructions, and recovery resources. In disasters and emergencies, language access is a life-safety issue—evacuation orders, shelter information, health guidance, and aid applications must be accessible to all residents, not only those who speak English.

By funding HI-EMA's bilingual resources and services, this bill helps ensure timely, accurate communication and equitable access to emergency response and recovery support. It will reduce confusion and delays, strengthen public trust and compliance with emergency directives, and help ensure that all communities in Hawai'i can stay informed and safe during emergencies.

I urge you to PASS HB2622 HD1 and fully fund the appropriation.

Mahalo,

Thaddeus Pham

1013 Prospect Street

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 9:00:48 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Deanna Espinas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in support: because it provides residents with limited English proficiency much needed language access to important resources.

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2026 4:13:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry

COMMENT USE AI DEVICE FOR TRANSLATION

2622 HB RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 12:15:03 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dianne Deauna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Dianne Deauna

In SUPPORT of HB2622 HD1

Committee on Finance

Representative Chris Todd, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: Feb 27, 2026

Dear Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Dianne, and I submit this testimony in **support of HB2622 HD1**, which appropriates funds for the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

I am currently a student at UH Mānoa, and I am testifying as an individual. I'm from the Philippines, and when I first moved to Hawai'i, it was sometimes difficult navigating official government communications because of the way they were written, which is not usually for ESL people. This has become even more apparent with the rise of emergency situations affecting the State for which information must be communicated quickly and effectively.

HB2622 HD1 is important because emergency preparedness and response only work when people can understand alerts, instructions, and recovery resources. In disasters and emergencies, language access is a life-safety issue—evacuation orders, shelter information, health guidance, and aid applications must be accessible to all residents, not only those who speak English.

By funding HI-EMA's bilingual resources and services, this bill helps ensure timely, accurate communication and equitable access to emergency response and recovery support. It will reduce confusion and delays, strengthen public trust and compliance with emergency directives, and help ensure that all communities in Hawai'i can stay informed and safe during emergencies.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee **PASS HB2622 HD1** and fully fund the appropriation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Dianne Deauna

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 10:00 am

Conference Room 308 and Via Videoconference

State Capitol

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2622, HD1, RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Rep. Miyake for my district, Rep. Yamashita 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. I write to you today in **strong support of HB 2622, HD1**, Relating to Language Access, which appropriates funds for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to increase access to bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

As a resident of Maui, and someone who regularly volunteers to serve its immigrant and migrant community, the provisions made under HB 2622, HD1 are long past due. A March, 2024 Civil Beat article, “People With Limited English Lost Money And Help In Lahaina Response”¹ documents how lack of access to translation and interpretation services in the aftermath of the fires was a barrier to recovery for many survivors. According to Pacific Gateway Center, quoted in the article, over one-third of Lahaina residents, pre-disaster, were foreign born, and 36% aged five or older spoke a language other than English at home. I cannot help but wonder whether some of the loss of life during the fire, and some of the barriers to recovery thereafter, could have been prevented if Hawaii Emergency Management Agency had had better bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency. This measure helps to remedy that shortcoming and better serve all our residents.

I **strongly support HB 2622, HD1** and call upon all the members of the Committee, and especially my Representative Miyake, to vote in support of the measure. Let us do what we can to protect and prepare all our community members.

In honor of Lahaina,

Christine Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

¹ Madeleine Valera, Honolulu Civil Beat, “People With Limited English Lost Money And Help In Lahaina Response,” March 10, 2024.

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 5:28:02 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

The complex crises and disasters we have warned about are now happening. We often say we follow a "whole community" approach to preparedness, response, and recovery. But what does that really mean when our community includes people from many different language and cultural backgrounds? And what about tourists and visitors, who also become part of our community during disasters? Making sure everyone has access to information in their own language is essential for safety, trust, and getting help, whether it is relief services, long-term support, or recovery. I support this measure to honor especially the survivors of the Maui wildfire. I am also grateful to a Filipino doctor missionary and his wife, who happened to be in Maui during the disaster. They became first responders and were especially helpful because they spoke the language and understood the culture. If you have visited Hawaii, maybe on a whale-watching cruise, you have probably noticed that our visitors now come from many places, not just Japan, but also Korea, China, and other countries. Our state needs to make sure our language access plans reflect this reality.

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 7:52:06 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen-Rae Cachola	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Finance,

Please support HB 2622 Relating to Language Access. The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency should already be providing language services for residents with limited English proficiency.

I witnessed the effects of not having these services organized and in place during the Lahaina wildfire. As a person with ties to Maui, I remember learning that many Filipino immigrants who were displaced by the fire could not understand all of the emergency information at the hubs. I was involved in reaching out to family and relatives involved with organizations on Maui and Oahu who might be able to provide translation services to those people in crisis.

Our local government should be more aware of the language needs of residents always, and not put the burden on ordinary people to scramble to connect people with limited English proficiency to the help they need. Many of these community members work hard for Hawai'i. The least they can get is government communication responsiveness and language access preparedness to be there for them at all times, and especially when crisis occurs.

Please pass HB 2622.

Thank you,

Ellen-Rae Cachola

HB-2622-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/26/2026 11:54:48 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcella Alohalani Boido	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To all,

Thank you for hearing this important bill.

I have read the testimony in support from HCIR and other organizations.

This is to express my agreement with them.

Please pass this bill.

Thank you.

Marcella Alohalani Boido, M.A.

Resident & Voter, Senate District 10, House District 23

Moili'ili, Honolulu, 96826