

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



SIERRA WHITESIDE
CHAIRPERSON

DAINTRY BARTOLDUS
EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

April 7, 2026

The Honorable Representative Chris Todd, Chair
House Committee on Finance
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Todd and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: SB2109 SD2 HD1 Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities is in **support of SB2109 SD2 HD1**, which requires the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to develop and implement a statewide public education and communications program to promote household emergency preparedness consistent with the Agency's 14-day essential supplies recommendation. Requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official live broadcast during a state of emergency. Requires the Governor or mayor of a county to ensure, to the fullest extent possible, that the American Sign Language interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are visible during the broadcast. Requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide a primary pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window. Requires reports to the Legislature prior to the Regular Sessions of 2027, 2028, 2029, and 2030. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1).

Access to clear, timely, and accessible emergency information is critical for people with disabilities, including many individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). This measure aligns with Hawai'i's Access and Functional Needs (AFN) framework, which recognizes that individuals may require additional supports related to communication, mobility, supervision, or medical needs during emergencies. Ensuring that emergency communications include American Sign Language interpretation and are delivered in accessible formats is a core component of meeting AFN responsibilities and reducing risk during disasters.

The measure also strengthens preparedness efforts by promoting advance planning and public education. Individuals with I/DD and their caregivers often require additional time, coordination, and support to prepare for emergencies. Clear, accessible guidance—such as planning for essential supplies—helps individuals and families take proactive steps, reduces reliance on emergency systems, and supports more effective response when disasters occur.

By reinforcing both real-time communication and preparedness through an AFN-informed approach, this measure supports a more inclusive and effective emergency management system. These improvements help ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind during emergencies and can safely remain in their communities.

For these reasons, the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities **supports SB2109 SD2 HD1.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT SENATE BILL 2109 SD2 HD1
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka ‘Oihana ‘Imi Kālā
(House Committee on Finance)
Ke Kapitala‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

‘Apelila 7, 2026

2:00 PM

Lumi 308

Aloha e Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

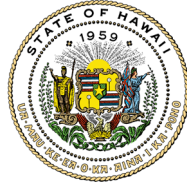
The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB2109 SD2 HD1**, which establishes a statewide, multi-lingual, emergency preparedness education and communications program within Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA). OHA appreciates recent amendments which require the Governor or mayor, as applicable, to provide a primary pool feed, rather than a standardized pool feed, during any live official announcement and removing specific requirements for the size and placement of the picture-in-picture window.

For many Native Hawaiian ‘ohana and other underserved communities, preparedness is limited by affordability constraints, housing conditions, multigenerational living arrangements, and uneven access to trusted information. Efforts to improve readiness must therefore go beyond general public messaging and instead reflect the lived realities of the communities most at risk. This bill moves the State in this direction by centering accessibility, cultural relevance, and practical usability in how preparedness information is developed and shared.

To that end, OHA maintains extensive and trusted communication channels with beneficiaries statewide. OHA regularly communicates with beneficiaries through social media, email alerts, our award-winning online and print newspaper *Ka Wai Ola*, and other in-person outreach events and forums. OHA stands ready to provide consultation and to collaborate with HIEMA and other relevant partner agencies in developing and disseminating culturally relevant, multilingual, and community-informed preparedness communications, if requested. Through our existing networks, beneficiary services, and trusted relationships with community organizations, OHA is prepared to assist in outreach efforts.

For these reasons, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs urges the committee to **PASS SB2109 SD2 HD1**. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

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 PŪULIA

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 SENATE BILL 2109 SD2 HD1,
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

April 7, 2026

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

I am writing to express support for Senate Bill 2109 SD2 HD1, which mandates critical enhancements to Hawai'i's emergency preparedness communications and accessibility efforts under the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA).

This bill addresses key challenges unique to our state's geography and demographics by requiring a comprehensive, statewide public education program that promotes household readiness with a recommended fourteen-day supply of essential food, water, and medications. Given Hawai'i's remote location and vulnerability to natural disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes, empowering households to be self-sufficient is essential for saving lives and enhancing resilience.

Importantly, SB2109 SD2 HD1 ensures that emergency communications are inclusive and accessible to all residents, including those with disabilities and limited English proficiency.

The requirement for certified American Sign Language interpreters during all official live emergency broadcasts will make vital information accessible to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, promoting equity and safety.

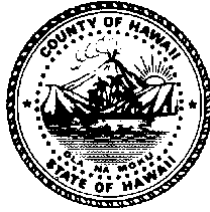
The bill's emphasis on culturally appropriate, multilingual materials and multi-channel dissemination strategies—tailored to different age groups and populations disproportionately affected by disasters—reflects a thoughtful, community-centered approach. Expanding bilingual resources within HIEMA further supports our diverse immigrant communities, ensuring no one is left behind during emergencies.

Additionally, the mandated evaluation and reporting framework fosters transparency and accountability, enabling continuous improvement of preparedness efforts. While the bill's funding specifics and effective date require clarification, the overall vision and provisions represent a significant advancement toward a safer, more prepared Hawai'i.

I respectfully urge the committee to support SB2109 SD2 HD1. Thank you for your consideration.

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

C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor



William V. Brillhante, Jr.
Managing Director

Merrick Nishimoto
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i ~ Office of the Mayor

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Testimony of
C. Kimo Alameda, Ph.D.
Mayor, County of Hawai'i

Before the House Committee on
Finance
Rep. Chris Todd, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Tuesday, April 7, 2026, 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

In consideration of
Senate Bill 2109, SD2, HD1
Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 2109, SD2, HD1. After consulting our communications team, we support the intent of this measure, especially Part II, to improve emergency accessibility for residents who are deaf or hard of hearing. However, we do not support the bill as currently written.

The bill's language requires an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter in a picture-in-picture window during every official announcement broadcast. This mandate could critically delay or even prevent the delivery of urgent, potentially life-saving information if a certified ASL interpreter is unavailable. Third-party agencies are our main resource for interpreters, but there is no guarantee that one will always be available quickly, nor can we always rely on video communication services to be online and operable during emergencies.

We respectfully request that Section 6 be amended to allow for official announcement broadcasts to still be carried out without an ASL interpreter if all reasonable attempts to provide an ASL interpreter in a picture-in-picture window have been made, but it is not possible to be provided in a reasonable amount of time in relation to the urgency of the state of emergency.

We are in strong support of greater accessibility, but we believe this bill, in its current draft, could prevent us from providing urgent video information to the public during emergencies, risking public safety.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and provide comments on Senate Bill 2109, SD2, HD1.

SB-2109-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 8:15:53 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support.



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Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Advisor*
Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Finance
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: April 7, 2026
TIME: 2pm

RE: SB2109 SD2 HD1 Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communication
Position: Support

The Hawaii Food Industry Association is comprised of two hundred member companies representing retailers, suppliers, producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and beverage related products in the State of Hawaii.

HFIA is in support of this measure to develop and implement a statewide public education and communications program to promote household emergency preparedness consistent with the Agency's 14-day essential supplies recommendation.

As the measure notes, household emergency preparedness is a critical element of statewide resilience and continuity during hurricanes, floods, wildfires, earthquakes, tsunamis, pandemics, supply chain disruptions, and other emergencies. Hawaii emergency management agency (HIEMA) recommends that households maintain a fourteen-day supply of essential emergency supplies, including food, water, and regularly used medications, however, only twelve per cent of households statewide appear to meet the fourteen-day standard.

Enabling Hawaii households to be better prepared and more resilient means a more prepared and resilient Hawaii. We urge the Committee to pass this measure and we thank you for the opportunity to testify.



April 6, 2026

To: Chair Chris Todd, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and the House Committee on Finance

Subject: **SB2109 SD2 HD1** Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications

Aloha,

I am writing in **support with comments for SB2109 SD2 HD1**, which requires the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to develop and implement a statewide education and communications program to promote household emergency preparedness consistent with the agency's fourteen-day essential supplies recommendation with the amendment requiring the governor or county mayors have an ASL interpreter clearly visible for any emergency broadcasts.

Hawai'i's food system is intensely import dependent, with the vast majority of our food flowing solely through the port of Honolulu. The closest ports to supply us are thousands of miles away. The amount of food stored in facilities on Honolulu is also only enough to last the islands a handful of days. Our food system is already dancing on a knife's edge. **Together these factors would be disastrous for us in the event that the port were rendered inoperable for any amount of time such as by a natural disaster.**

Until our import dependency is resolved, the only realistic means of preparedness is at the household level. Though the state has developed preparedness recommendations of a fourteen-day stock of supplies, scarce few households are even aware such a recommendation exists. Informing the public of preparedness recommendations will be a valuable factor in securing public health and safety in the event of a natural disaster. The same can be said for requiring ASL interpreters. It's vital to inform as many people as possible in these kinds of situations through as many channels as possible, and so the state should do everything in its power to inform.

As such we urge the committee to **pass SB2109 SD2 HD1**. Knowledge is power, and an informed public is our best means of protecting ourselves both reactively and proactively from the clear and present threat of supply chain disruption to our islands. Thus, we believe that any required spending is **a more than worthwhile investment for the sake of safeguarding the public**. We acknowledge that there are barriers to household preparedness that public education alone will not solve, but education nonetheless is a fantastic place to start and gives households the

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2026, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



HAWAI'I FOOD+ POLICY

Honolulu, HI 96813
food@purplemaia.org

opportunity to become prepared. One cannot be prepared for, or respond to something, that they do not know is a possibility, and warnings are futile if one cannot understand them. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for this bill.

Mahalo,
Sydney Haas & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

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In 2026, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

Apr 7, 2026

MISSION

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

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Roxanne U. Bolden

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Sheila Castaneda
Jennifer Hartssock

The Honorable Chris Todd, Chair
House Committee on Finance
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: Support for SB2109 SD2 HD1 – Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) is a Center for Independent Living serving people with all types of disabilities statewide. This measure directly impacts the safety, autonomy, and community integration of disabled residents and their ohana before, during, and after disasters.

Independent Living philosophy affirms that disabled people must be able to obtain, understand, and act on emergency information in real time in order to remain in their homes and communities, avoid unnecessary institutionalization, and make self-directed choices during disasters. SB2109 SD2 HD1 recognizes that household preparedness and accessible communication are core to statewide resilience and explicitly identifies persons with disabilities or access and functional needs, medically vulnerable individuals, kupuna, low-income households, and communities with limited English proficiency as priority audiences for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency's fourteen-day preparedness campaign.

Part I's requirement that HI-EMA develop a statewide, multimedia communications program—using culturally relevant, multilingual, and accessible materials, with specific attention to people with disabilities and access and functional needs—aligns with federal guidance that emergency alerts and information must be multimodal and accessible. From a Finance perspective, this is a relatively modest investment with high potential



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Vice Chair

Zora Shove

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Scott Suzuki
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return: increasing the share of households that actually meet the fourteen-day standard for food, water, and medications can reduce strain on shelters, hospitals, and emergency response systems during future disasters, particularly for disabled people who rely on durable medical equipment, personal care, and regular medications to stay out of institutions.

Part II's requirement that the Governor and county mayors provide a certified American Sign Language interpreter at live emergency press conferences, clearly visible on screen and included in the standardized pool feed, brings Hawaii's practice closer to existing obligations under the ADA and Section 504 for effective communication. Ensuring the interpreter is consistently visible and included in the pool feed also makes it easier and less costly for broadcasters to carry accessible coverage, rather than each outlet trying to create its own solution. Part III's appropriation to expand HI-EMA's bilingual resources and language access capacity will help meet long-standing civil rights and grant compliance requirements while ensuring that households with limited English proficiency—including many that include disabled members—receive timely, understandable emergency information.

AILH continues to support the framework of SB2109 SD2 HD1 and the appropriations attached to it, and we respectfully reiterate our prior recommendations from a cross-disability Independent Living perspective:

- Require HI-EMA to co-design the communications plan and media assets with cross-disability community stakeholders, including Centers for Independent Living and organizations representing Deaf, hard of hearing, blind/low vision, intellectually or developmentally disabled, and people with psychosocial disabilities.
- Clarify that “formats accessible to persons with disabilities” include, at minimum, captioning, ASL, plain-language materials, screen-reader compatible digital content, audio description for critical video content, and alternative print/tactile formats where



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feasible.

- Strengthen the technical requirements for the ASL picture-in-picture window so that size, resolution, and contrast are sufficient for clear viewing across common broadcast and streaming platforms.
- Require, to the extent feasible, that evaluation data on preparedness and program reach be disaggregated by disability status and other access and functional needs so the Legislature can monitor whether disabled and limited-English-proficient households are actually being reached.
- Align HI-EMA's communications program with Hawaii's language access law and Office of Language Access guidance, and with any existing state plans relating to emergency preparedness for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

From a Finance standpoint, these clarifications help ensure that the funds appropriated in SB2109 SD2 HD1 produce measurable improvements in preparedness and access for those residents who face the highest barriers and are most costly to serve in post-disaster response and recovery when communication fails.

AILH respectfully urges the Committee on Finance to pass SB2109 SD2 HD1 and to incorporate the above clarifying amendments so that emergency preparedness and communications investments fully advance Independent Living and cross-disability equity statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,

Roxanne Bolden



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Executive Director

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Roxanne U. Bolden

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

HEARING:
Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 2:00 pm
Via Videoconference and Conference Room 308

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2109, SD2, HD1 - RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

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 SB 2109, SD2**, Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications, which requires the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to develop and implement a statewide public education and communications program to promote household emergency preparedness consistent with the Agency's fourteen-day essential supplies recommendation; requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official live broadcast during a state of emergency; requires the Governor or mayor of a county to ensure, to the fullest extent possible, that the American Sign Language interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are visible during the broadcast; requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide primary pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window; requires reports to the Legislature 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 and disaster preparedness education. 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. The need for multilingual and accessible emergency information has been recently highlighted by the kona low storms. We stand in solidarity with the deaf and hard-of-hearing community in requesting that this community, too, have access to necessary and potentially life-saving emergency information.

As a Maui-based disaster-response organization serving migrant and immigrant communities, we support a statewide public education and communications program to promote emergency preparedness and to ensure access to information in a state of emergency. **We urge you to support SB 2109, SD2, HD1** and to vote to pass it out of this committee.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Mendoza', written over a white background.

Veronica Mendoza

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



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2109, SD2, HD1
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS**

House Committee on Finance

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: April 7, 2026 | Letter Date: April 6, 2026

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

The Legal Clinic (TLC) is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to advancing justice for immigrants in Hawai`i through immigration legal services, community education, and policy advocacy. We strongly support SB2109, SD2, HD1 which strengthens Hawai`i's emergency preparedness communications and incorporates key language access provisions that were advanced in SB3239.

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 not only from our own experiences navigating language and cultural barriers but from years of work alongside immigrant communities, government agencies, and immigrant-serving organizations across the state, particularly in times of crisis and recovery – from the Lahaina fires to the Covid-19 pandemic.

SB2109, SD2, HD1 requires the Hawai`i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) to develop and implement a comprehensive statewide public education and communications program. Importantly, the measure explicitly requires culturally appropriate, accessible, and multilingual materials to meet the needs of residents with limited English proficiency (LEP). The bill also appropriates funds to expand language access resources within HIEMA, building upon the core capacity-building goals of SB3239.

Hawai`i's population is diverse. Eighteen percent of residents are foreign-born, with the majority of immigrants from Asia and the Pacific and nearly half from the Philippines. Hawai`i also has one of the highest per-capita rates of LEP persons in the nation: nearly one in four residents speaks a language other than English at home, and one in nine has limited English proficiency. Common languages spoken by Hawai`i's foreign-born communities include Cantonese, Chuukese, Ilocano, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Marshallese, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog, and Tongan.

Immigrants contribute billions of dollars to Hawai`i's economy - paying taxes, creating businesses, and staffing essential jobs - often while earning low wages and lacking access to social benefits. Communicating in the languages people understand is crucial to their ability to access safety, services, and resources. Many foreign-born residents experience severe barriers to full participation in the community - lacking information on government services,

experiencing prejudice and cultural misunderstanding, and unable to access resources due to language barriers.

Without accessible communications, many foreign-born residents lack vital information about emergency procedures, relief programs, evacuation notices, and recovery resources. Language barriers compound existing vulnerabilities and place lives at risk. Translators and interpreters were urgently needed after the fires in Lahaina, a community with 30% foreign-born residents, 40% Filipino, and a significant LEP population. The recent weather emergency announcements should have been available in multiple languages. Timely, multilingual emergency communication is essential to community safety.

SB2109, SD2, HD1 will enable HIEMA to proactively strengthen its communications and language access infrastructure before the next disaster strikes. Because HIEMA coordinates with other agencies, including health services, before, during, and after emergencies, strengthening communications and language access capacity within HIEMA is critical to providing equitable and effective emergency response statewide.

In a state as diverse as ours, emergency communication must reach everyone. Disasters do not discriminate, and neither should access to lifesaving information. SB2109, SD2, HD1 is an investment in public safety, equity, and resilience for all Hawai'i residents, and we urge the Committee to advance this bill.

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



Christina Sablan
Community & Policy Advocate



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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

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April 7, 2026

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Senate Bill 2109 Senate Draft 2 House Draft 1 – Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 2109 Senate Draft 2 House Draft 1 – Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications. This bill requires the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to develop and implement a statewide public education and communications program to promote household emergency preparedness consistent with the Agency's 14-day essential supplies recommendation. It requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official announcement broadcast via television or the Internet during a state of emergency. It requires the Governor or mayor of a county to ensure, to the fullest extent possible, that the American Sign Language interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are visible during the broadcast. It requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide a primary pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window. It requires annual reports to the Legislature prior to the regular Sessions of 2027, 2028, 2029, and 2030. It appropriates funds and is effective 7/1/3000.

We respectfully request that the bill be amended to include explicit requirements for the picture-in-picture window and to provide the State and counties sufficient time to implement these procedures. We propose that the bill be amended as follows:

SECTION 6. Chapter 127A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

§127A-B Official announcements; proclamations; emergencies; American Sign Language interpreter; display; requirements; picture-in-picture required. (a) Beginning July 1, 2027, whenever the governor or mayor, as applicable, makes a proclamation pursuant to this chapter, the governor or mayor shall provide a qualified American Sign Language interpreter who is certified by a nationally or state recognized credentialing authority at each live broadcast press conference during the state of emergency. To the greatest extent possible, the governor or mayor shall ensure that the American Sign Language interpreter is physically positioned in a manner so that the interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are always visible during a television or internet broadcast of the press conference.

(b) The governor or mayor, as applicable, shall provide a (1) standardized pool feed for any live official announcement that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window not less than one quarter the size of the primary video or (2) a live video streaming with the interpreter in a side by side window

not less than one quarter the size of the primary video. (3) Any window shall be large enough to clearly see the interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands. The interpreter shall not be blocked or covered by captions, graphics, or other on-screen text; provided that the captions, graphics, or other on-screen text shall be repositioned as necessary. A broadcaster that rebroadcasts the official announcement shall not be required to independently generate or insert this accessibility feature

SECTION 11. This Act shall take effect on July 1, [3000] 2027.”

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

SB-2109-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/4/2026 2:06:42 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	The Legal Clinic	Support	In Person

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

I strongly endorse SB 2109 for it will increase communication access capacity to meet HI-EMA's mission. Our community acknowledges the contributions, rights, responsibilities of all people in our community, including persons needing American Sign Language and those who are are Limited English Language proficient My testimony in support of this bill but will focus on the language access needs of limited English proficient communities.

My testimony is informed by being an immigrant myself and working with immigrant communities, government agencies and immigrant groups.

Our state population is diverse, with 18% foreign-born population who come from many countries including Canada, Mexico and Japan. The majority of immigrants are from Asia and the Pacific with 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 Cantonese, 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. Many foreign-born residents including those 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. This bill will help HiEMA and other government agencies provide LEP in our state receive services and meet language access mandates. Government, private companies and non-profit organizations need persons who are qualified to provide language access. Translators and interpreters were needed after the fires in Lahaina, a community with 30% foreign-born, 40% Filipino and a significant percentage LEP. The recent weather emergency announcement should be available in multiple languages to insure safety

with assistance from government agencies. HI-EMA coordinates and has partnerships with other agencies (egbhealth services) during emergencies as well as preparation and after emergencies.

In addition to requesting funds for a statewide public education and communications plan for emergency preparedness. This measure includes a communication plan that is multilingual and serves LEP persons in the state. It should be noted that language access resources for HiEMA is important but that other state agencies must also address language access needs, e.g. the majority of bilingual service needs are in the area of health and the Department of Health administers SHIPDA and the Office of Language Access, units that can provide language translations and interpretations if provided funds to contract with non profit and for-profit organizations that can hire bilingual staff. Bilingual persons are urgently needed at Hi-EMA and the Department of Health.

I respectfully request support for SB 2109 supporting language access for disadvantage Infivifusls who sre limited English proficient and those who utilize American Sign Language.



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Testimony of Liza Ryan-Gill

In SUPPORT of SB2109 SD2 HD1

Hearing Date: April 7, 2026

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

My name is Liza Ryan-Gill, and I submit this testimony in support of SB2109 SD2 HD1, which requires the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency to develop a statewide emergency preparedness public education program, requires the Governor or county mayor to provide an ASL interpreter during official live broadcasts during a state of emergency with technical standards ensuring the interpreter is fully visible in a picture-in-picture window, and appropriates funds for HIEMA to expand bilingual resources and services for residents with limited English proficiency.

I am the Co-director and Refounder of the Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR), and I am testifying on behalf of HCIR. HCIR is a coalition of more than 30 immigrant-serving and immigrant-led organizations across the pae ‘āina working to advance policies that protect immigrant and migrant communities and strengthen Hawai‘i as a place where all families can thrive. Our communities include immigrants, refugees, multilingual families, Deaf and hard-of-hearing residents, and other underserved households who rely on clear, consistent, and accessible public messaging to stay safe before, during, and after emergencies.

Emergency Information Must Reach Everyone

Emergencies are life-or-death situations, and for Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and limited English proficient residents — who are disproportionately immigrant, Pacific Islander, and low-income — inaccessible emergency broadcasts mean they may not receive critical information in time to evacuate or seek safety. SB2109 SD2 HD1 closes this gap with real technical standards: ASL interpreters must be certified by a nationally or state recognized credentialing authority, fully visible with face and hands unobstructed, in a picture-in-picture window of at least one quarter the size of the primary video, not blocked by captions or graphics. These specifications prevent token compliance — an interpreter partially obscured or squeezed into a corner is not true accessibility. The bill makes accessibility real, consistent, and usable across platforms.

This is both a civil rights and a public safety issue. When official emergency broadcasts are not accessible to Deaf and hard-of-hearing residents, those communities are left to piece together life-saving instructions secondhand — if at all. The technical standards in SD1 ensure that



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accessibility is built into the broadcast standard itself, not left to the discretion of individual agencies or stations.

Proactive Preparedness Saves Lives

The statewide public education program component addresses the other side of the same problem: communities cannot prepare for emergencies they have not been equipped to anticipate. Hawai'i's island geography makes the 14-day readiness standard especially important — after a major hurricane, wildfire, flood, or tsunami, communities may be cut off from outside aid for extended periods. Yet only about 12% of households statewide currently meet the 14-day standard, with rates as low as 8.5% in Kaua'i County and 8.9% in Maui County. A consistent, proactive statewide preparedness program — using a coordinated multi-media strategy across television, social media, radio, and mobile platforms, tailored to the documented channel preferences of different age groups — ensures that all residents, including immigrants, limited English proficient households, and underserved communities, receive the guidance they need to be self-sufficient during those critical early days. The Kona Low flooding in early 2026 demonstrated, again, the acute information access gaps that LEP and Deaf communities face in Hawai'i's real disaster scenarios.

Preparedness education also reduces strain on emergency services when disasters strike. When more households know what to do and have what they need, first responders can focus resources on those most in need.

Language Access for Limited English Proficient Residents

SB2109 SD2 HD1 also takes an important step by appropriating funds for HIEMA to expand bilingual resources and services. Hawai'i's foreign-born population is 260,000 — 18% of the State's total — and more than 10% of residents have limited English proficiency, speaking languages including Ilokano, Tagalog, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Samoan, and Micronesian languages such as Pohnpeian, Marshallese, and Chuukese. HIEMA currently has only one language coordinator. Expanding bilingual capacity is not only a public safety necessity — it is required to comply with federal civil rights mandates under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166. These resources will meaningfully increase HIEMA's ability to serve our most vulnerable communities before, during, and after disasters.

Why Finance Committee Support Matters

This bill's mandates are only as strong as the resources behind them. The HIEMA public education program requires sustained investment to reach diverse communities across all islands — including translation, multilingual outreach, and culturally appropriate materials. The ASL interpretation requirement must be implemented consistently and at scale. The expansion of



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bilingual resources requires dedicated staffing and services. This Committee's support for full funding is what turns a well-designed policy into a functioning system that actually saves lives.

Having passed the Senate, SB2109 SD2 HD1 comes before Finance for appropriation review. HCIR urges this Committee to support both the policy and the funding it requires.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee PASS SB2109 SD2 HD1 and fully fund its implementation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Liza Ryan-Gill
Co-director and Refounder
Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Chris Todd, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Via Videoconference and Conference Room 308

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2109, SD2, HD1 - RELATING TO EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS.

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, Rep. Miyake for my Maui district, Rep. Yamashita of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews. I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui, and a lawyer licensed for over 25 years in Hawai'i. I am also the parent of a hard-of-hearing child. I **strongly support SB 2109, SD2, HD1**, Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications, which requires the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to develop and implement a statewide public education and communications program to promote household emergency preparedness consistent with the Agency's 14-day essential supplies recommendation; requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official live broadcast during a state of emergency; requires the Governor or mayor of a county to ensure, to the fullest extent possible, that the American Sign Language interpreter's face, body, arms, and hands are visible during the broadcast; requires the Governor or mayor of a county to provide a primary pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window; and requires reports to the Legislature.

As the parent of a hard-of-hearing child and an attorney, I am surprised that ASL interpretation is not currently mandated on state and local announcements during a state of emergency. We have learned many hard lessons in the aftermath of the Maui wildfires and recent kona low storms. Ensuring disaster preparedness education statewide and facilitating equitable access to information during a state of emergency are important steps toward greater preparedness and resilience. While I stand with the deaf and hard-of-hearing community and their need for access to necessary and potentially life-saving information during a disaster, I also note that many in Maui are foreign-born and speak English as a second language. Many of the languages most commonly spoken in Hawaii are not served by the current emergency alert system. I strongly advocate for inclusion of emergency information in the languages of our migrant and immigrant neighbors in this bill as it moves forward.

Thank you for your support of this potentially life-saving measure and for helping all of our community members be prepared for and informed in the case of future emergencies. I respectfully request that you vote in **support of SB 2109, SD2, HD1**.

Mahalo,

Christine L. Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

SB-2109-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/5/2026 5:13:36 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackie Keefe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Todd, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Jackie Keefe, and I am **in support of SB2109 SD2 HD1**. Please pass this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

SB-2109-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 8:42:54 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diann Karin Lynn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SB2109 SD2 HD1 — **Emergency Preparedness and ASL Interpretation During States of Emergency**

I am a supporter of The Legal Clinic in their advocacy in support of all Hawai'i residents.

The first and most important responsibility of government is to protect its people - all of its people, citizen and immigrant, legal or not, whether hale and hearty, disabled or compromised.

In this case of this bill, I am writing in SUPPORT because it is a LIFE-SAFETY BILL. Inaccessible broadcasts cost lives. The recent (and possibly upcoming repetition of the) Kona Low weather emergency demonstrated in stark terms why this bill matters; communities need accessible emergency info. The bill will

- Require the state's Emergency Management Agency develop statewide emergency preparedness education program.
- Require an ASL interpreter with full technical standards (PIP window, fully visible) during official emergency broadcasts. Technical ASL standards close the gap for Deaf, HH, and LEP communities.
- Appropriate funds.

Please vote aye and move this bill.

Mahalo
Diann K Lynn
Mō'ili'ili

SB-2109-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 10:21:28 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christian Marquez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Christian Marquez, and I submit this testimony in support of SB2109 SD2 HD1, which requires the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency to develop a statewide emergency preparedness public education program, and requires the Governor or county mayor to provide an ASL interpreter during official live broadcasts during a state of emergency, with technical standards ensuring the interpreter is fully visible in a picture-in-picture window.

Emergencies are life-or-death situations, and for Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and limited English proficient residents — who are disproportionately immigrant, Pacific Islander, and low-income — inaccessible emergency broadcasts mean they may not receive critical information in time to evacuate or seek safety. SB2109 SD2 HD1 closes this gap with real technical standards: ASL interpreters must be fully visible, face and hands unobstructed, in a picture-in-picture window during official emergency broadcasts. These specifications prevent token compliance — an interpreter partially blocked by graphics or squeezed into a corner is not true accessibility.

The statewide emergency preparedness education program component ensures communities receive proactive guidance, not just reactive information during crises. The Kona Low flooding in early 2026 demonstrated the acute information access gaps that LEP and Deaf communities face in Hawai‘i’s real disaster scenarios. Having passed the Senate and House PBS, this bill comes before Finance for the final appropriation review before the floor.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee PASS SB2109 SD2 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Christian Marquez

SB-2109-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 10:48:53 AM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy D Moser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

in support

Testimony In SUPPORT of SB2109 SD2 HD1

Committee on Public Safety

Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair

Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 20, 2026

Dear Chair Della Au Belatti, Vice Chair Kim Coco Iwamoto, and members of the Committee on Public Safety,

My name is Jeremiah Brown, and I submit this testimony in support of SB2109 SD2 HD 1, which requires the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency to develop and implement a statewide public education and communications program to promote household emergency preparedness consistent with the Agency's fourteen-day essential supplies recommendation. SB2109 SD2 HD1 also requires the Governor or a county mayor to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official emergency announcement broadcast via television or the Internet, with clear visibility and standardized picture-in-picture requirements, and appropriates funds to support implementation.

The pandemic, Maui wildfires, and recent flooding on Oahu's North Shore have shown us the importance of timely, accurate information that is accessible by all members of our community. This bill takes an important step in that direction, ensuring that the deaf community can access important information during emergencies.

SB2109 SD2 HD1 is a practical, life-safety measure. Hawai'i faces hurricanes, fires, flooding, and other emergencies where timely and clear information can save lives. A consistent statewide public education program strengthens household readiness, reduces confusion, and helps families prepare to be self-sufficient during the critical early period of a disaster.

Equally important, emergency communications must be accessible to everyone. Requiring ASL interpretation during official emergency announcements with visibility standards and a standardized picture-in-picture feed ensures deaf and hard-of-hearing residents can receive life-saving instructions and updates in real time. These standards make accessibility meaningful and usable, not optional or inconsistent.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee PASS SB2109 SD2 HD1 and fully fund its implementation. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Jeremiah Brown
Waialua, Oahu

SB-2109-HD-1

Submitted on: 4/6/2026 3:03:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 4/7/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Christie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Amanda Christie, and I am writing to **strongly support SB2019.**