



‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT SENATE BILL 2109 SD1
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ke Ki‘ina Hana a me nā Kumuwaiwai
(Senate Committee on Ways and Means)

Ke Kapitala‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

Malaki 3, 2026

10:17 a.m.

Lumi 211

Aloha e Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB2109 SD1**, which establishes a statewide, multi-lingual, emergency preparedness education and communications program within Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA).

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 recognizes and accepts the responsibility outlined in this measure to collaborate with HIEMA and partner agencies in developing and disseminating culturally relevant, multilingual, and community-informed preparedness communications. 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 SD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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

1010 Richards Street, Rm. 118 • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129 • (808) 204-2466 (VP)

March 3, 2026

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

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

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 2109 Senate Draft 1 – Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications. 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. 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 standardized pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window not less than one quarter the size of the primary video and not blocked or covered by captions, graphics, or other on-screen text. It requires annual reports to the Legislature and it appropriates funds.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing and rely on American Sign Language (ASL) did not receive equitable or effective communication during recent public emergencies, such as COVID-19, the Lahaina wildfires, and the tsunami warning. Significant communication barriers were reported, including the lack of qualified interpreters, interpreters being positioned too far from speakers, interpreters being partially obstructed or poorly lit, and television broadcasts failing to ensure interpreters were clearly visible on screen.

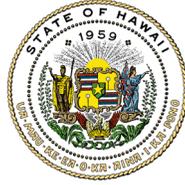
As a result, many individuals who rely on ASL were unable to access critical, time-sensitive information necessary to protect their health and safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

KRISTINE PAGANO
Acting Executive Director

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 PŌULIA

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 SD1,
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

March 3, 2026

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

HIEMA overall supports Senate Bill 2109 SD1 and its important goals to enhance emergency preparedness communication across the state, including the promotion of a statewide fourteen-day household emergency supply recommendation, expanded multilingual resources for limited English proficiency populations, and improved accessibility for persons with disabilities.

HIEMA recognizes and strongly supports the intent to increase accessibility through the inclusion of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters during official emergency announcements. Ensuring that emergency information is accessible to deaf and hard-of-hearing residents is a critical component of equitable emergency communication. **However, HIEMA respectfully proposes the following amendment and offers considerations regarding the ASL interpreter requirements:**

- **Availability of Certified ASL Interpreters:**

During rapid-onset emergencies, it may be challenging to always secure the immediate availability of certified ASL interpreters and locations due to the limited pool of qualified professionals within the state.

- **Jurisdiction Over Broadcast Formatting:**

HIEMA does not have jurisdictional control over how private news media outlets format their broadcasts. This limitation may affect the agency's ability to ensure full compliance with the statute's detailed requirements for interpreter visibility and picture-in-picture display.

To address these concerns, HIEMA proposes including language that acknowledges the practical limitations of ASL interpreter requirements. HIEMA recommends temporarily pausing implementation for one year to allow the agency to conduct a survey and analysis to identify best practices for effective execution.

This amendment will help ensure that the intent of increased accessibility is achieved without placing unsustainable operational or financial demands on HIEMA and partner agencies.

HIEMA appreciates the Legislature's leadership on this important bill and looks forward to working collaboratively to implement its provisions effectively and equitably across Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support testimony for Senate Bill 2109 SD1.

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



Hawaiian Humane Society
People for animals. Animals for people.

Date: Feb. 27, 2026

To: Chair Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Sen. Sharon Moriwaki
and Members of the Committee on Ways & Means

Submitted By: Stephanie Kendrick, Vice President of Community Engagement
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Testimony in support of SB 2109 Relating to
Emergency Preparedness Communications
Tuesday, March 3, 2026, 10:17 a.m., Room 211 & Videoconference

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for Senate Bill 2109, SD1, 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 announcement broadcast via television or the Internet 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 standardized pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window not less than one quarter the size of the primary video and not blocked or covered by captions, graphics, or other on-screen tax; requires annual reports to the Legislature; and appropriates funds.

As the City and County of Honolulu's animal services contractor, Hawaiian Humane is deeply involved in disaster preparation and response. We are in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the lead up and during disasters. We understand the crucial role that community preparation plays in saving lives.



Hawaiian Humane Society

People for animals. Animals for people.

Our President and CEO, Anna Neubauer, was recently named to the Citizens Advisory Commission on Emergency Management for the City and County of Honolulu in recognition of the importance of including animals in our disaster planning.

We support SB 2109 and we ask that it be amended to include pet food, supplies and medications in all sections mentioning the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency's (HiEMA) supplies recommendations.

In a 2024 Ward Research survey commissioned by the Hawaiian Humane Society, 59 percent of O'ahu households reported owning at least one pet. While we did not survey the other counties, the highest rates of pet ownership on O'ahu are in our rural communities, suggesting that the popularity of pet ownership on the neighbor islands is at least as high. More than 90 percent of pet owners consider their pets to be part of their families. In recognition of that fact, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires that provisions are made for pet owners in disaster planning and response and all of Hawai'i's government-operated emergency shelters welcome pets.

Hawai'i shelters, however, do not have the resources to provide supplies for those animals. Whether their plan is to go to a government shelter, stay with family or friends, or make some other accommodation, our families need to include their pets in their disaster plans.

Hawaiian Humane does regular media outreach and community education around the importance of disaster preparation and we would welcome the opportunity to work with HiEMA in support of the types of communication outlined in this bill.

Please pass SB2109, SD1, with amendments including our animal family members. Mahalo for your consideration.



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 |
Honolulu, HI 96813
P: 808-533-1292 | e:
info@hawaiiifood.com

Executive Officers

Kit Okimoto, Okimoto Corp., *Chair*
Jayson Watts, Mahi Pono, *Vice Chair*
Jill Tamura, Tamura Super Market, *Secretary/Treas.*
Lauren Zirbel, HFIA, *President and Executive Director*
Paul Kosasa, ABC Stores, *Advisor*
Toby Taniguchi, KTA Superstores, *Advisor*
Joe Carter, Coca-Cola Bottling of Hawaii, Odom, *Advisor*
Eddie Asato, Pint Size Hawaii, *Advisor*
Gary Okimoto, Safeway, *Advisor*
Maile Miyashiro, C&S Wholesale, *Immediate Past Chair*

TO: Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: HAWAII FOOD INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
Lauren Zirbel, Executive Director

DATE: March 3, 2026
TIME: 10:17am

RE: SB2109 SD1 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 strengthen public readiness by directing the Hawaii emergency management agency to develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan, strategy, and related media assets to educate and motivate residents to maintain a fourteen-day supply of food, water, and essential medications.

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.



March 1, 2026

To: Chair Donovan Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki and the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Subject: **SB2109 SD1** Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications

Aloha,

I am writing in **support with comments for SB2109 SD1**, 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 SD1**. 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 SB2109 SD1.

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

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.



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB2109, SD1
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS**

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Sen. Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair

Sen. Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 3, 2026 | Letter Date: March 2, 2026

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, 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, SD1, 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, SD1 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, SD1 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, SD1 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



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

HEARING:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 10:17 am
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2109, SD1 - RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
COMMUNICATIONS.

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Maui Senators Hashimoto and DeCoite, 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, SD1**, 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 announcement broadcast via television or the Internet 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 standardized pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window not less than one quarter the size of the primary video and not blocked or covered by captions, graphics, or other on-screen tax.

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. 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, SD1** and to vote to pass it out of this committee.

Sinceramente,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica', written over a horizontal line.

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 SB2109 SD1**

Committee on Ways and Means

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

Hearing Date: March 3, 2026

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

My name is Liza Ryan-Gill, and I submit this testimony on behalf of the Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) in strong support of SB2109 SD1, which requires the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) to develop and implement a statewide public education and communications program promoting household emergency preparedness consistent with HI-EMA’s fourteen-day essential supplies recommendation. SB2109 SD1 also requires the Governor or a county mayor to provide an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter during each official emergency announcement broadcast via television or the Internet, with visibility standards and a standardized pool feed with clear picture-in-picture requirements, and appropriates funds to support implementation.

HCIR is a coalition of 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, and multilingual families—many of whom rely on clear, consistent public messaging and accessible communications to stay safe before, during, and after emergencies.

SB2109 SD1 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 and communications program strengthens household readiness, reduces confusion, and helps families prepare to be self-sufficient during the critical early period of a disaster. Emergency preparedness education saves lives and reduces strain on emergency services when disasters strike, and a statewide program reinforces the fourteen-day readiness message through consistent, proactive outreach.

Equally important, emergency communications must be accessible to everyone. SB2109 SD1 recognizes that ASL access is both a civil rights and public safety issue—everyone deserves real-time emergency information. Requiring ASL interpretation during official emergency



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

announcements—with standards that ensure the interpreter’s face, body, arms, and hands are visible—helps ensure Deaf and hard-of-hearing residents can receive life-saving instructions and updates in real time. The bill also includes practical requirements so interpretation is actually usable, including a standardized pool feed and a picture-in-picture window that is at least one-quarter the size of the primary video and not blocked by captions or other graphics. These clear standards improve consistency across stations and platforms, reduce confusion, and make emergency messaging equitable and effective.

Finally, SB2109 SD1’s annual reporting requirements will help evaluate implementation, identify gaps, and strengthen the program over time. For these reasons, HCIR respectfully requests that the Committee PASS SB2109 SD1 and fully fund its implementation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Liza Ryan-Gill

Executive Director, Hawai‘i Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR)

lryangill@hicir.org



LATE

March 2, 2026

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

Re: SUPPORT of SB2109 SD1 RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS

Hrg: March 3rd at 10:17AM

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 450 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in SUPPORT of funding for Senate Bill 2109.

HPHA is aware that the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency already deploys public messaging on the importance of being 14-days ready for any natural disaster or emergency. HPHA welcomes this opportunity to further develop and implement a statewide public education and communications program aimed at promoting household emergency preparedness. The appropriation of funds to support this initiative is a necessary investment in the health and safety of our state.

It is crucial for all residents and visitors to be equipped with the knowledge and resources necessary to respond effectively to emergencies. By mandating HIEMA to lead a comprehensive public education program, we can significantly enhance the preparedness of our households statewide.

Public education is a vital component of disaster preparedness. When residents are informed about the importance of maintaining essential supplies for at least 14-days ready, they are more likely to take the necessary steps to protect themselves and their families. We can empower individuals and families to make informed decisions and reduce panic during actual emergencies.

This initiative will continue to foster a culture of preparedness throughout our communities. More households will take responsibility for their safety and the safety of those around them. This not only benefits individual families but also strengthens the overall resilience of our communities. When more households are prepared – it reduces the strain on emergency services and ensures a more effective response during disasters.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB 2109.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holly Kessler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Holly Kessler
Executive Director

SB-2109-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/27/2026 11:15:58 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/3/2026 10:17:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cory Harden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha legislators,

Please support this bill to give deaf and hard of hearing people access to emergency information. I have hearing loss, and find I often don't know when something important is happening, or I misunderstand what is going on, and that lack of understanding is dangerous.

mahalo,

Cory Harden, Hilo

SB-2109-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 8:19:28 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/3/2026 10:17:00 AM

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

Comments:

STRONGLY SUPPORT SB2109 SD1

SB-2109-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 4:45:45 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/3/2026 10:17:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jen Lum, and I submit this testimony in support of SB2109 SD1, 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 SD1 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.

Mahalo,

Jen Lum, 'Ewa Beach

SB-2109-SD-1

Submitted on: 2/28/2026 5:35:20 PM

Testimony for WAM on 3/3/2026 10:17:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marie Iding	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislature,

To assure that everyone has access to emergency information, having an ASL interpreter is important.

Thank you,

Marie Iding

SB-2109-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 8:17:28 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/3/2026 10:17:00 AM

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

Comments:

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee and members

My name is Amy Agbayani, President of The Legal Clinic Hawaii a non-profit community organization providing legal representation and assistance to low- income immigrants and families

I strongly endorse SB 3239 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.

SB-2109-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/2/2026 9:12:27 AM

Testimony for WAM on 3/3/2026 10:17:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dawn Morais Webster Ph.D.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- Emergency preparedness education saves lives and reduces confusion and strain on emergency services during disasters.
- A statewide communications program strengthens consistent, proactive outreach around the 14-day readiness message.
- ASL interpretation during emergency announcements is a life-safety and civil rights issue—everyone needs real-time access to critical directives and updates.
- The bill includes practical standards (interpreter visibility + PIP size + not blocked) so accessibility is actually usable, not optional.
- Standardized pool feeds improve consistency across stations/platforms and reduce misinformation.
- Annual reporting supports accountability and continuous improvement in emergency communications
- THis bill is good government in action and protects the public. Mahalo for moving it forwad.

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

HEARING:

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 10:17 am
Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2109, SD1 - RELATING TO EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS.**

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Senators Hashimoto for my district, Senator DeCoite 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, SD1**, 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 announcement broadcast via television or the Internet 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 standardized pool feed that includes the American Sign Language interpreter in a picture-in-picture window not less than one quarter the size of the primary video and not blocked or covered by captions, graphics, or other on-screen tax.

As the parent of a hard-of-hearing child and an attorney, I find it shocking 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 I would imagine that ensuring disaster preparedness education statewide and facilitating equitable access to information during a state of emergency would be high on the list. 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. I would strongly advocate for inclusion of emergency information in the languages of our migrant and immigrant neighbors in this bill.

Thank you 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, SD1**.

Mahalo,

Christine L. Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui