

**STATE HEALTH PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH - KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

JOSH GREEN, MD
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOHN C. (JACK) LEWIN, MD
ADMINISTRATOR

1177 Alakea Street, #402, Honolulu, HI 96813

Phone: 587-0788 Fax: 587-0783 www.shpda.org

March 19, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

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

**RE: SB 2109-SD2 -- RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
COMMUNICATION**

HEARING: Friday March 20, 2026 @ 10:30 am; Conference Room 411

POSITION: SUPPORT

Testimony:

SHPDA strongly supports SB 2109-SD2 which requires Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) to create a statewide program to promote household 14-day minimum emergency preparedness, and to require American Sign Language interpretation to be prominently displayed. We add that the emergency preparedness planning must include language interpretation for at-risk non-English as a first language populations in the communications planning for and in actual disaster and emergency responses. Whatever additional resources HIEMA indicates they need to meet these challenges should be top priorities for adequate funding.

Thank you for hearing this bill; and for the opportunity to testify.

■ -- Jack Lewin, MD, Administrator, SHPDA



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)

LATE

March 20, 2026

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Mar 20, 2026, 9:27 am

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Bill 2109 Senate Draft 2 – 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 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. Please see the attached screenshots of a recent emergency press conference for examples of these communication barriers.

An on-site ASL interpreter is preferable, however we recognize that there are factors which may make this difficult for some counties or in certain situations. The bill does not specifically require on-site ASL interpreters, DCAB suggests the bill clarify to include video remote interpreting services (VRI) as an option by amending Section 6 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 an 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

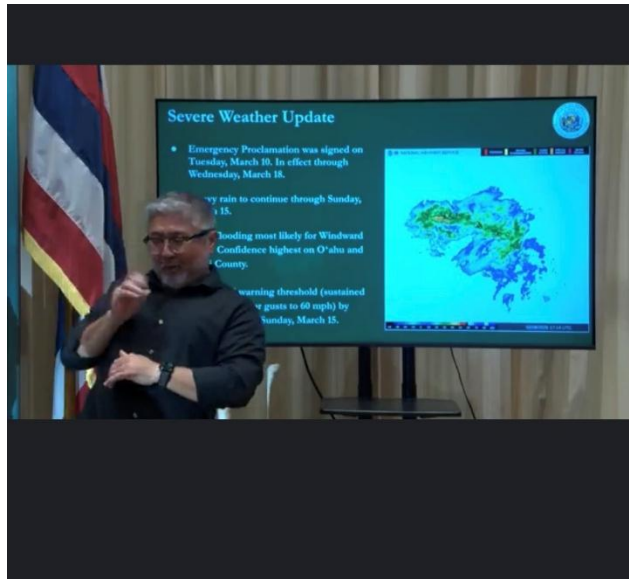


KRISTINE PAGANO
Acting Executive Director

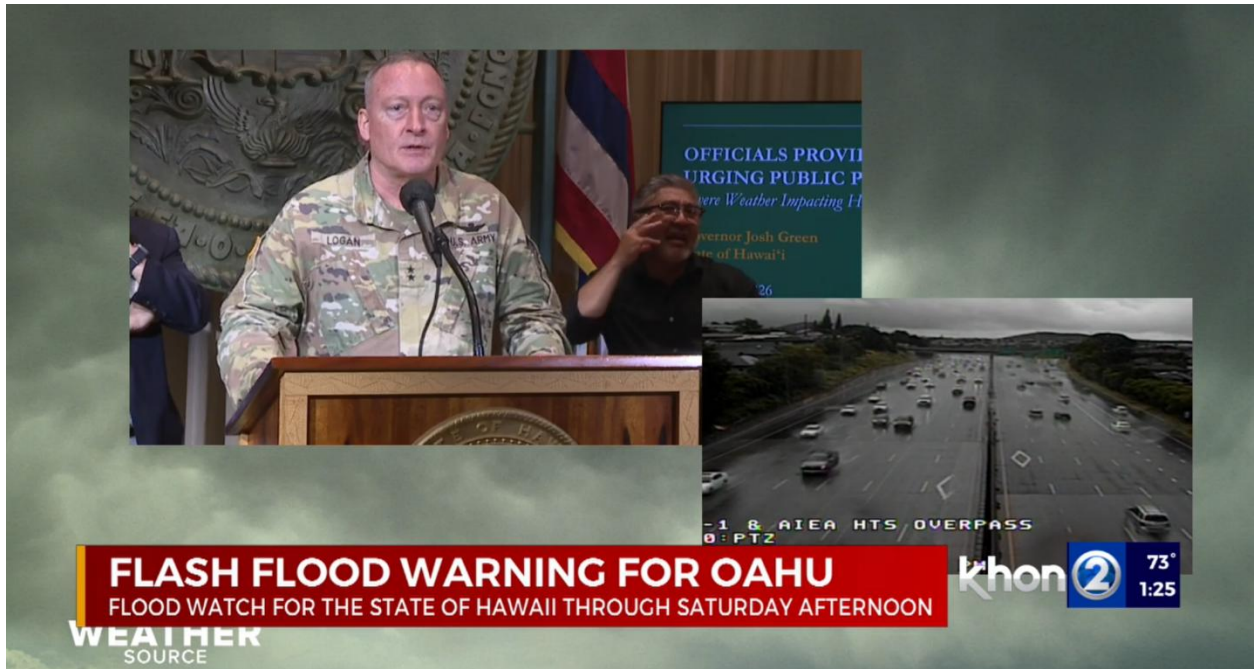


Office of the Governor - Officials To Provide Storm Update. Urge Public Preparedness

(ASL Interpreter does not have adequate lighting)

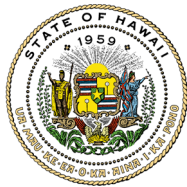


(ASL Interpreter is positioned partially blocking the information displayed behind him)



(Secondary window is partially obscuring ASL interpreter)

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,
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC SAFETY

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

March 20, 2026

Aloha Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA) appreciates the opportunity to submit **SUPPORT** testimony regarding SB2109 SD2. This bill significantly strengthens Hawai'i's resilience by directing HIEMA to implement a coordinated, statewide communications program promoting the 14-day emergency supply recommendation. Current data show that only a small share of households meet this standard, and public awareness is inconsistent across counties. Senate Bill 2109 SD2 addresses these gaps by requiring clear, actionable, and multilingual guidance using a multi-media approach that reaches residents of all ages and backgrounds.

The measure also enhances emergency accessibility by requiring a certified American Sign Language interpreter for all official announcements during emergencies, with clear visibility standards and a required picture-in-picture feed. These provisions ensure that Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing residents receive timely and accurate information during critical events.

Additionally, the bill expands language access capacity to support Hawai'i's large immigrant and limited-English-proficient communities. With nearly one-quarter of residents speaking a language other than English at home, strengthening bilingual resources is essential to equitable emergency communication and compliance with federal civil rights requirements.

For these reasons, HIEMA respectfully urges the Legislature to pass SB2109 SD2.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2109 SD2.

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



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

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

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Palekana Lehulehu
(House Committee on Public Safety)

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

Malaki 20, 2026

10:30 a.m.

Lumi 411

Aloha e Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the House Committee on Public Safety:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits this testimony in **SUPPORT of SB2109 SD2**, 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 SD2**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2109-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 3:39:19 PM

Testimony for PBS on 3/20/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Chair Fukunaga, Vice Chair Lee and members

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.



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

**Testimony of Liza Ryan-Gill
In SUPPORT of SB2109 SD2**

LATE

**RECEIVED
Date & Time**
Mar 19, 2026, 12:13 pm

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 Liza Ryan-Gill, and I submit this testimony in support of SB2109 SD2, 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 HI-EMA’s 14-day essential supplies recommendation, and requires the Governor or county mayor to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official announcement broadcast via television or the Internet during a state of emergency, with clear visibility standards and a standardized picture-in-picture feed.

I am the Executive Director 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, and other underserved residents who rely on clear, consistent, and accessible public messaging to stay safe before, during, and after emergencies.

SB2109 SD2 is a practical, life-safety measure that addresses two critical gaps in Hawai‘i’s emergency preparedness and communications infrastructure. First, a consistent statewide public education program ensures that all residents — including immigrants, limited English proficient households, and underserved communities — receive the preparedness information they need to be self-sufficient during the critical early days of a disaster. Hawai‘i’s island geography makes the 14-day readiness standard especially important, because communities may be cut off from outside aid for extended periods after a major hurricane, wildfire, flood, or other emergency. A proactive statewide preparedness program can save lives, reduce confusion, and lessen strain on emergency services when disasters strike.



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

Equally important, emergency communications must be accessible to everyone. SB2109 SD2 recognizes that ASL access is both a civil rights and public safety issue. Requiring ASL interpretation during official emergency announcements — with clear visibility standards and a standardized picture-in-picture feed of at least one quarter the size of the primary video, not blocked by captions or graphics — helps ensure that Deaf and hard-of-hearing residents can receive life-saving instructions and updates in real time. These are not vague aspirations; the technical specifications in SD2 make accessibility real, consistent, and usable across platforms.

This bill is especially important for communities that already face barriers to receiving timely emergency information. In a crisis, delays, confusion, or inaccessible communication can have serious consequences. Clear preparedness education and accessible emergency broadcasts help ensure that all families, regardless of language background or disability status, have an equitable opportunity to protect themselves and their loved ones.

The Committee on Public Safety is exactly the right place to advance this practical emergency preparedness and equity measure. SB2109 SD2 will strengthen Hawai‘i’s readiness, improve public safety communications, and help ensure that no community is left behind during an emergency.

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



1050 Bishop St. PMB 235 |
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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*

LATE

**RECEIVED
Date & Time**

Mar 20, 2026, 9:26 am

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

DATE: March 20, 2026
TIME: 10:30am

RE: SB2109 SD2 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.



March 18, 2026

To: Chair Della Au Belatti, Vice Chair Kim Iwamoto, and the members of the House Committee on Public Safety

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

Aloha,

I am writing in **support with comments for SB2109 SD2**, 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**. 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

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.

SB-2109-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 4:57:20 PM

Testimony for PBS on 3/20/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

In support.



Hawaiian Humane Society
People for animals. Animals for people.

Date: March 18, 2026

To: Chair Rep. Della Au Belatti
Vice Chair Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto
and Members of the Committee on Public Safety

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

RE: Testimony in support of SB 2109, SD2,
Relating to Emergency Preparedness Communications
Friday, March 20, 2026, 10:30 a.m., Room 411 & Videoconference

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for Senate Bill 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 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 participates in disaster preparation and response, and joins the city Emergency Operations Center when activated. We understand the crucial role that community preparation plays in saving lives. Our President and CEO, Anna Neubauer, was recently named to the Citizens Advisory Commission on Emergency Management for the City



Hawaiian Humane Society

People for animals. Animals for people.

and County of Honolulu in recognition of the importance of including animals in our disaster planning.

We ask that SB2109 be amended to include pet food, supplies and medications in all sections mentioning the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency's (HiEMA) supplies recommendations. For example:

SECTION 2. Chapter 127A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§127A-A Fourteen-day emergency preparedness communications program. (a) The agency shall develop and implement by July 1, 2027, a statewide public education and communications program to increase household preparedness consistent with the agency's fourteen-day essential supplies recommendation for food, water, and regularly used medications, as well as pet food, supplies and medications.

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 goals of this bill.

Please pass SB2109, SD2, with amendments that recognize the fact that most of our local households include animal family members. Mahalo for your consideration.



COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

HEARING:
Friday, March 20, 2026 at 10:30 am
Via Videoconference and Conference Room 411

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

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 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 text.

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, SD2** 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
RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMUNICATIONS**

LATE

House Committee on Public Safety
Rep. Della Au Bellati, Chair
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

RECEIVED
Date & Time
Mar 20, 2026, 9:28 am

Hearing Date: March 20, 2026 | Letter Date: March 19, 2026

Dear Chair Bellati, Vice Chair Iwamoto, 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, 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 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 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 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

Testimony In SUPPORT of SB2109 SD2

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, 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 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 and Maui wildfires 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 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 and fully fund its implementation. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Jeremiah Brown
Waialua, Oahu

SB-2109-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/19/2026 8:36:32 AM

Testimony for PBS on 3/20/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yvette Kay	Kona Indivisible and Matriarchy Rising	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha House Committee and all others,

My name is Yvette Kay and I am a resident of Kailua Kona, HI 96740
yvettekay_99@yahoo.com, 415-706-9638

I support this bill because:

- Emergency preparedness education saves lives — a statewide program ensures all communities, including immigrant and LEP residents, receive consistent, accessible preparedness outreach.
- Hawai‘i’s island geography makes the 14-day readiness standard especially critical: communities may be cut off from outside relief for extended periods after a major disaster.
- ASL access during states of emergency is a life-safety issue and a civil right — Deaf and hard-of-hearing residents must be able to receive life-saving directives in real time.
- Technical standards matter: PIP window $\geq \frac{1}{4}$ size of primary video, not blocked by captions/graphics, standardized pool feed — these details make accessibility real, not just aspirational

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair
Rep. Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Friday, March 20, 2026 at 10:30 am
Via Videoconference and Conference Room 411

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

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, Rep. Poepoe of Maui, Rep. Woodson 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**, 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 text.

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. Ensuring disaster preparedness education statewide and facilitating equitable access to information during a state of emergency are important steps forward to 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. 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 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**.

Mahalo,

Christine L. Andrews, JD
Wailuku, Maui

SB-2109-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 4:50:41 PM

Testimony for PBS on 3/20/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I strongly SUPPORT SB2109.

Mahalo,

Kanani Kai

Member Indivisible Hawaii.

SB-2109-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/18/2026 6:15:19 PM

Testimony for PBS on 3/20/2026 10:30:00 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 SD2, 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 HI-EMA's 14-day essential supplies recommendation, and requires the Governor or county mayor to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official announcement broadcast via television or the Internet during a state of emergency, with clear visibility standards and a standardized picture-in-picture feed.

This is common sense to make sure that all out our citizens have access to emergency information.

Mahalo,

Jen Lum, 'Ewa Beach

**Testimony of Barbara Tom
In SUPPORT of SB2109 SD2**

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 Barbara Tom and I submit this testimony in **support of SB2109 SD2**, 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 HI-EMA's 14-day essential supplies recommendation, and requires the Governor or county mayor to provide an American Sign Language interpreter during each official announcement broadcast via television or the Internet during a state of emergency, with clear visibility standards and a standardized picture-in-picture feed.

I am the Director of Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Center, we provide a hub of services to the immigrant/Migrants communities of Waipahu. I am testifying as an individual who has worked with underserved migrant families during the Pandemic and the Maui wildfires. We saw first-hand the barriers to accessing timely services and information. As a previous Public Health Nurse who looked at prevention as the key to successful health outcomes, I feel this bill will be preventative measure in supporting families during the critical stages of a disaster.

SB2109 SD2 is a practical, life-safety measure that addresses two critical gaps in Hawai'i's emergency preparedness and communications infrastructure. First, a consistent statewide public education program ensures that all residents — including immigrants, limited English proficient and underserved communities — receive the preparedness information they need to be self-sufficient during the critical early days of a disaster. Hawai'i's island geography makes the 14-day readiness standard especially important: communities may be cut off from outside aid for extended periods after a major hurricane, wildfire, or flood.

Equally important, emergency communications must be accessible to everyone. Requiring ASL interpretation during official emergency announcements — with clear visibility standards and a standardized picture-in-picture feed of at least one quarter the size of the primary video, not blocked by captions or graphics — ensures that Deaf and hard-of-hearing residents can receive life-saving information in real time. These are not vague aspirations: the technical specifications in SD2 make accessibility real and usable. The Public Safety Committee is exactly the right place to advance this practical emergency preparedness and equity measure.

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Barbara Tom
Phone: 808-392-5946

To: Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair
Committee on Public Safety

From: Veronica Moore, Individual Citizen

Date: March 19, 2026

RE: Senate Bill 2109 SD2
Measure Title: RELATING TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
COMMUNICATIONS.
Report Title: HIEMA; Emergency Preparedness; Emergency Communications;
Limited English Proficiency; Language Access; Official Announcements;
American Sign Language; Sign Language Interpreter; Program; Reports;
Appropriations (\$)

To All Concerned,

My name is Veronica Moore and I support Senate Bill 2109 SD2. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Veronica M. Moore