



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

#### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Higher Education  
March 16, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

By

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

SB 3238 SD1 – RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports SB 3238 SD1 – Relating to Language Access. The University of Hawai'i (UH) applauds the efforts of the legislature to build on the success of the Department of Education's Seal of Biliteracy program while striving to address language accessibility issues by creating a mechanism to develop a cadre of qualified translators and interpreters for spoken and written translation efforts. This program would help recognize and deploy the oftentimes untapped talents of many UH students and community members.

Currently, the bill states that the proposed "language access education and workforce development program" shall serve "eligible high school graduates" as well as "members of the community." If the intent of this measure is indeed to provide broad community access interpreter training, we would like to offer the following context and suggestions for your consideration:

- 1) UH Mānoa has the most competitive admissions requirements and the highest tuition and fees in the UH System. While SB 3238 SD1 states that the program in question shall be administered by the SEED Office at UH Mānoa, we would also like to point out that Kapi'olani Community College (Kapi'olani CC) possesses capacity in the area of interpreter training. Kapi'olani CC has developed a series of non-credit interpreter training courses, including versions focusing on the court system and medical settings. Kapi'olani CC has offered its Medical Interpreting course to two Department of Education high schools (Pearl City and Konawaena) with online components. Additionally, Kapi'olani CC is in the process of (a) developing multi-course, non-credit stackable pathways in this area and (b) moving these offerings into fully online formats.
- 2) Please note that many professional settings (e.g., the court system) have official licensure processes and requirements that exist independently from higher education. As such, while a UH program could award students with a certificate of completion as specified in this measure, in practice gainful employment as an interpreter will often depend on the attainment of additional credentialing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of measure SB 3238 SD1. This legislative effort to expand the pool of trained translators and interpreters in the workforce to serve our multilingual communities is commendable, as is the opportunity to leverage UH's many excellent language programs.



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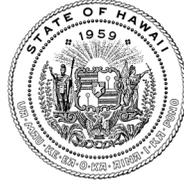
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JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY  
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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

March 16, 2026

To: The Honorable Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair,  
The Honorable Terez Amato, Vice Chair, and  
Members of the House Committee on Education

Date: Monday, March 16, 2026  
Time: 2:00 p.m.  
Place: Conference Room 309, State Capitol

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

**Re: S.B. 3238 S.D.1 RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS**

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

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

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

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



To: The Honorable Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
The Honorable Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Higher Education

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President  
Mike Nguyen, Director of Public Policy  
Maria Rallojay, Public Policy Specialist

Hearing: Monday, March 16, 2026, 2:00pm, Conference Room 309

RE: **SB3283 SD1 Relating to Language Access**

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AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support** of **SB3238 SD1**. This measure establishes a statewide language access education and workforce development program at the University of Hawai'i.

AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan founded by Hawai'i's Community Health Centers and the Queen Emma Clinics. We serve over 66,000 Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dual-eligible residents on all islands. Since 1994, AlohaCare has partnered with providers, government entities, and community-based organizations to meet the evolving needs of our safety net community as Hawai'i's only health plan focused solely on Medicaid-eligible individuals. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for equitable access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare's commitment to whole-person care and health equity includes addressing various social determinants of health. With half our members mainly speaking languages other than English, we understand that language can be a barrier to receiving care. We appreciate the intent of this measure to address this barrier by growing a trained, culturally competent workforce.

With the upcoming implementation of community engagement requirements for various federal programs, such as Medicaid, this measure is also a smart workforce development investment that simultaneously strengthens language access across public systems and expands meaningful career pathways for bilingual residents.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support** of **SB3238 SD1**.



COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair

Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Monday, March 16, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Via Videoconference and Conference Room 309

State Capitol

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB3238, SD1 - RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, Rep. Woodson 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 3238, SD1**, Relating to Language Access, which establishes a language access education and workforce development program at the University of Hawaii and appropriates monies.

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

In our work we have identified risks to our community presented by unnecessary barriers, such as the current significant unmet need for qualified bilingual assistance. In our work helping Maui wildfire survivors navigate disaster recovery, health care, and legal representation, we have identified lack of qualified bilingual assistance as a significant barrier. At the time of the wildfires, about one-third of Lahaina residents were foreign born, and 36% aged five and older spoke a language other than English at home. Roots Reborn has helped close some of the gap with disaster management and legal program language assistance. However, the need for bilingual assistance, especially for mental health and physical health treatment, is preventing survivors from receiving the care that they need to recover from the disaster. This is why SB 3238 is so greatly needed.

Senate Bill 3238, SD1 creates a pathway to increase Hawaii's language access workforce by drawing upon our existing communities. It supports multilingual students by creating training opportunities, career experience, and professional pathways to become trained, qualified interpreters/translators and bilingual professionals. Being bilingual is not the same as being trained to interpret or translate. Professional language access requires specialized skills, confidentiality standards, and ethics. Establishing a statewide program helps ensure language access is competent, ethical, and consistent. We **urge you to support SB 3238, SD1** and to vote to pass it out of this committee.

Sinceramente,

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

Veronica Mendoza

Maui Roots Reborn, *Founding Executive Director*

El Pueblo en Accion Maui, *Founding Coalition Member*

March 15, 2026

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair

Representative Terez Amato Vice Chair

Committee Members

Committee on Higher Education

**RE: Testimony in Support of SB3238 SD1**

My name is Barbara Tom, and I am the Director of the Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center. Through our work serving immigrant and migrant families in Waipahu and surrounding communities, we have witnessed firsthand the serious challenges caused by the lack of adequate language access in Hawai‘i.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many limited English proficient residents—particularly from Pacific Islander, Micronesian, and Filipino communities—did not receive timely or understandable information about testing sites, wrap around services, health services, and emergency assistance. We saw these same gaps again during the Maui fire disaster, where families speaking Pacific Island languages and multiple Filipino dialects struggled to navigate relief services due to the absence of qualified interpreters and translated resources. These experiences demonstrated how language barriers can directly impact health, safety, and recovery outcomes.

Hawai‘i continues to face a shortage of trained and qualified language access professionals across community, education, and health systems. For this reason, we strongly support HB2005. At Waipahu High School, we work closely with students who have earned the Seal of Biliteracy and are multilingual. These students represent an untapped and highly capable workforce that can help bridge critical language gaps in our communities.

Creating education and workforce development pathways at the university level—including formal training, certification, and paid internships—will strengthen the interpreter workforce, expand language access services statewide, and provide meaningful career opportunities for bilingual students. Investing in this pipeline will not only improve equity in public services but also empower local youth to serve their own communities.

Mahalo for your consideration and for **supporting SB3238 SD1**.

Barbara Tom

Director

Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center

Phone: 808-392-5946



March 15, 2026

Position: **SUPPORT** of **SB3238 SD1**, Relating to Language Access

**To:** Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Higher Education

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

**Re:** Testimony in SUPPORT of SB3238 SD1, Relating to Language Access

Hearing: Monday, March 16, 2026, 2:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 309, State Capitol

The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women **supports SB3238 SD1**, which establishes a Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawaii. **Access to language services is a critical component of ensuring equity and full participation for women**, particularly those from immigrant communities. This bill is directly relevant to the Commission's mission to advance the status of women and girls in Hawaii by addressing barriers to opportunity and inclusion.

Women who face language barriers are at increased risk of social and economic marginalization, which can limit access to education, employment, healthcare, and essential public services. By creating a dedicated program to train and develop a workforce skilled in biliteracy competencies, this measure has the potential to **improve service delivery and support for women who are often underrepresented and underserved**. The University of Hawaii, as the state's leading public institution of higher education, is well-positioned to lead such an initiative, leveraging its expertise and reach across diverse communities.

**Improved language access infrastructure not only benefits women but also strengthens families and communities by promoting greater civic engagement and economic security.** The proposed appropriation will help ensure that the program is adequately resourced to meet its objectives.

The Commission respectfully requests that the Committee **pass SB3238 SD1**, establishing this language access education and workforce development program, reducing barriers to care and expanding opportunities for Hawaii's youth.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

**SB-3238-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 1:31:26 PM

Testimony for HED on 3/16/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
amy agbayani	The Legal Clinic	Support	In Person

Comments:

Mahalo chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato and Committee members for hearing this bill and also for passing HB2005 with the same subject matter. I want to acknowledge the Filipinonlegislative caucus for their support also.

My name is Amy Agbayani, President of The Legal Clinic Hawai'i, a non-profit community organization providing legal representation and assistance to low-income immigrants and families and emeritus director of UH Manoa student diversity services. My testimony in support of this bill is informed by being a Filipino immigrant myself and working with immigrant communities, DOE, UH, government agencies and community groups.

I strongly endorse SB3238 for it will help meet language access mandates, meet academic educational objectives, develop workforce and career opportunities needed in our community.

Our community must acknowledge the contributions, rights, responsibilities of all people in our community, including our limited English proficient residents. Our state population is diverse, with 18% foreign-born population who come from many countries including Canada and Mexico. The majority of immigrants are from Asia and the Pacific; and 50% of immigrants are from the Philippines. Hawai'i immigrants contribute billions to the state GDP--paying taxes, creating businesses, staffing essential jobs--while often being paid very low wages and lacking access to social benefits. A majority of immigrants are US citizens and many have US citizen spouses and children.

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

attack. This bill will help the state develop workers to assist LEP in our state receive services to meet equal access mandates. Government, private companies and non-profit organizations need persons who are qualified to provide language access. For example, my own organization, The Legal Clinic depends on services of lawyers and other staff who can communicate with clients detained at the Federal Detention Center. Translators and interpreters were needed after the fires in Lahaina, a community with 30% foreign-born, 40% Filipino and a significant percentage LEP.

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

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

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

Mahalo. Amy Agbyani



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

**Testimony of Liza Ryan-Gill  
In SUPPORT of SB3238 SD1**

**LATE**

Committee on Higher Education  
Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair  
Hearing Date: March 16, 2026

Dear Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and members of the Committee on Higher Education,

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 **SB3238 SD1**, which establishes a **Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawai'i** and appropriates funds to help build Hawai'i's interpreter and translator workforce. HCIR is a statewide coalition advancing policies that protect immigrant communities and strengthen access, dignity, and due process across Hawai'i.

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 member organizations work closely with limited-English-proficient individuals and families who rely on accurate interpretation and translation to access essential services, understand their rights, and participate fully in civic life.

Language access is essential to equitable access to education, health care, legal services, emergency response, agricultural programs, and government services. The Legislature's measure summary for SB3238 states that the bill would establish this program at the University of Hawai'i and notes that the measure is currently referred to Education and Ways and Means. The current SD1 text further specifies that the program would be administered through the University of Hawai'i SEED office in collaboration with academic departments, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and other partners.

This bill is especially important because bilingual ability alone is not the same as professional interpretation or translation. In high-stakes settings, including health care, schools, courts, emergency services, and government programs, poor interpretation can lead to misunderstanding, exclusion, and harm. Hawai'i needs a stronger, more intentional pipeline to prepare qualified interpreters and translators with training in ethics, standards, confidentiality, accuracy, and culturally responsive communication.



[www.hicir.org](http://www.hicir.org) | Instagram @hicir  
[hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com](mailto:hicoalitionforimmigrantrights@gmail.com)

SB3238 SD1 offers a practical and forward-looking solution. According to the SD1 bill text, the program would provide training in translation and interpretation, specialized instruction for public service settings, and a certificate of completion recognizing qualified translation and interpretation proficiency. The bill also prioritizes admission for applicants who have earned the Seal of Biliteracy, helping create a pathway for multilingual students and community members to serve their communities in meaningful careers.

For immigrant and limited-English-proficient communities, this investment would have immediate and lasting benefits. A stronger interpreter and translator workforce means families can better understand school communications, patients can make informed medical decisions, survivors of violence can safely access help, workers can navigate public systems, and community members can engage more fully with public institutions. For Hawai'i, it also means building local workforce capacity rather than relying on inconsistent, ad hoc language access solutions.

We also appreciate that SB3238 SD1 is structured as a workforce development measure. The bill summary notes that the measure includes an appropriation, and the current SD1 text includes funding to carry out the program, including three full-time equivalent positions. This reflects that language access is not only a civil rights and equity issue, but also a workforce and systems issue requiring sustained investment.

For these reasons, HCIR respectfully urges the Committee on Higher Education to **PASS SB3238 SD1**.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,  
**Liza Ryan-Gill**  
Executive Director

**SB-3238-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2026 3:51:28 PM

Testimony for HED on 3/16/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kanani Kai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB3238.

Mahalo,

Kanani Kai

Member Indivisible Hawaii.

**SB-3238-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/12/2026 8:57:00 PM

Testimony for HED on 3/16/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kayti Luu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and members of the Committee on Higher Education,

My name is Kayti Luu, and I submit this testimony in support of SB3238 SD1, which establishes a Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawai‘i and appropriates funds to build Hawai‘i’s interpreter and translator workforce statewide.

I am an OB/GYN physician based in O‘ahu; I provide full-scope reproductive healthcare to patients throughout the state. Many of our patients identify their preferred language as other than English.

Language access is essential for equitable access to healthcare, education, legal services, emergency information, and government programs in Hawai‘i. Navigating the healthcare system, even for someone who speaks perfect English but has relatively low literacy in healthcare jargon, can be tricky. Having to do that in a completely different language adds an extraordinary challenge. Removing barriers for our patients will help to improve engagement and timely access to care.

There remains a significant unmet need for qualified interpreting and translation services across the State. SB3238 SD1 is a practical workforce solution: it creates a structured, statewide pipeline through the University of Hawai‘i to train interpreters and translators with the ethics, standards, and best practices required for high-stakes public service settings.

Bilingual ability alone is not the same as professional interpreting or translation. This bill strengthens quality and safety by building a trained workforce, while also creating career pathways for multilingual students and community members. It is a “win-win” for Hawai‘i: stronger public services and stronger workforce development. Having passed the Senate, SB3238 SD1 now has the opportunity to move forward in the House—and the Committee on Higher Education is the right place to champion this investment.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee PASS SB3238 SD1 and fully fund the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Kayti Luu

OBGYN Resident, ACOG Hawaii Section Vice Chair  
kaytiluu@hawaii.edu | 949-232-3396

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair

Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair

HEARING:

Monday, March 16, 2026 at 2:00 pm

Via Videoconference and Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 3238, SD1 - RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

Aloha Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, Rep. Woodson of Maui, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christine Andrews and I am a long-term resident of Wailuku, Maui. I am also an attorney licensed in the state of Hawaii for over 25 years and a founding coalition member of El Pueblo en Acción (EPA) Maui – The People in Action Maui. Earlier in my career I was also certified by the Japanese government in level one Japanese language interpretation. I am writing in **strong support of SB 3238, SD1**, Relating to Language Access, which establishes a statewide language access education and workforce development program at the University of Hawaii and appropriates funds.

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

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

This experience of witnessing such inaccurate and inappropriate interpretation in front of a family court judge in a case of domestic violence was shocking to me. I hope that my experience highlights for the Committee the importance of the goals of SB 3238, SD1 to provide professionally trained interpreters. I request that you support language access and **vote in support of SB 3238, SD1**.

Mahalo for all you do for your constituents and community,

Christine Andrews, JD  
Wailuku, Maui

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB3238 (SD1)**  
**Relating to Language Access**

TO: Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and Members of the Committee  
Higher Education

FROM: Helena Manzano

DATE: March 13, 2026

Dear Chair Garrett, Vice Chair Amato, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in **strong support of SB3238 (SD1)**. I submit this testimony as an individual with years of professional experience working to ensure Hawai'i residents have fair and equal access to state programs, services, and benefits.

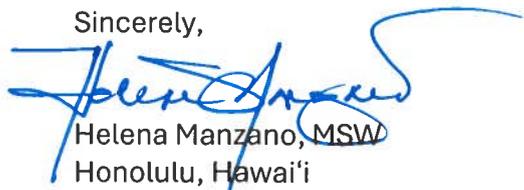
Language must not be a barrier to navigating and fully participating in our state systems. Although Hawai'i has a State Language Access Law (HRS 321C), there remains a practical challenge in meeting the demand for language assistance services, which exceeds the current supply of qualified interpreters and translators. To ensure our laws work as intended, the State needs a structured and sustainable pathway to develop professionals who can provide these services.

My support for this measure is based on three key points:

- **Bilingualism is only the starting point.** A common misconception is that being bilingual is sufficient to serve as an interpreter or translator. Professional or "qualified" interpreting and translating require knowledge of ethical standards, confidentiality protocols, and specialized techniques and terminology. In my experience, relying on untrained individuals is not only ineffective but can also create liability. It may introduce bias or errors that can lead to serious consequences, particularly in healthcare, education, human services, agriculture, transportation, emergency services, disaster response, and legal proceedings.
- **Developing our local talent pool.** Since 2017, the Hawai'i Department of Education has seen a 54% average annual increase in students earning the **Seal of Biliteracy**. With more than 3,000 students already recognized for their language skills, this measure helps create a pathway to turn that classroom achievement into a professional career in Hawai'i.
- **A workforce solution for the State.** Establishing this program at the University of Hawai'i will create a pipeline of trained and qualified language assistance providers, strengthening the State's capacity to serve the public effectively and maintain compliance with the law.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Helena Manzano, MSW  
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Email: yve\_manzano@yahoo.com

**SB-3238-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2026 1:37:53 PM

Testimony for HED on 3/16/2026 2:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jennifer Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I respectfully request that the Committee PASS SB3238 SD1 and fully fund the program. Language access is essential for equitable access to healthcare, education, legal services, emergency information, and government programs in Hawai‘i. Yet there remains a significant unmet need for qualified interpreting and translation services across the State. SB3238 SD1 is a practical workforce solution: it creates a structured, statewide pipeline through the University of Hawai‘i to train interpreters and translators with the ethics, standards, and best practices required for high-stakes public service settings.

Bilingual ability alone is not the same as professional interpreting or translation. This bill strengthens quality and safety by building a trained workforce, while also creating career pathways for multilingual students and community members. It is a “win-win” for Hawai‘i: stronger public services and stronger workforce development. Having passed the Senate, SB3238 SD1 now has the opportunity to move forward in the House—and the Committee on Higher Education is the right place to champion this investment.

Mahalo

Jen Lum, 'Ewa Beach

**SB-3238-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 10:43:07 AM

Testimony for HED on 3/16/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Cuthbert	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Committee on Higher Education

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair

Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: March 16, 2026

Dear Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and members of the Committee on Higher Education,

My name is David Cuthbert, and I submit this testimony in support of SB3238 SD1, which establishes a Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawai‘i and appropriates funds to build Hawai‘i’s interpreter and translator workforce statewide.

I am a member of East Hawai'i Indivisible and I am testifying as an individual. [Optional:

Language access is essential for equitable access to healthcare, education, legal services, emergency information, and government programs in Hawai‘i. Yet there remains a significant unmet need for qualified interpreting and translation services across the State. SB3238 SD1 is a practical workforce solution: it creates a structured, statewide pipeline through the University of Hawai‘i to train interpreters and translators with the ethics, standards, and best practices required for high-stakes public service settings.

Bilingual ability alone is not the same as professional interpreting or translation. This bill strengthens quality and safety by building a trained workforce, while also creating career pathways for multilingual students and community members. It is a “win-win” for Hawai‘i: stronger public services and stronger workforce development. Having passed the Senate, SB3238 SD1 now has the opportunity to move forward in the House—and the Committee on Higher Education is the right place to champion this investment.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee PASS SB3238 SD1 and fully fund the program.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

David Cuthbert

telegrapher9@gmail.com

Pahoa, Hawai'i

March 15th, 2026

**Position:** Support of SB3238

**To:** Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair Rep. Terez Amato, Vice Chair Rep and Committee on Higher Education

**From:** Marnessa Rea, University Student

**Re:** Testimony in Support of SB3238, Relating to Language Access

Hearing: March 16th, 2026  
2:00 pm  
Conference Room 309, State Capitol

I would like to thank the committee for hearing this important bill. **I would like to express my strong support of SB3238.** Access to language services is a critical component to the empowerment of an individual within a community. SB3238 SD1, which establishes a Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawai'i, addresses barriers which impact the education and community connection, engagement, and the overall acclimation of an individual.

Girls and women who face language barriers often encounter significant obstacles in accessing healthcare, education, employment, and public services. By investing in language access education and workforce development, this bill supports the creation of a more inclusive environment where women from diverse backgrounds can thrive. The University of Hawai'i is well-positioned to lead this effort, given its expertise in both workforce training and serving multicultural communities.

I respectfully urge this Committee to pass SB3238, which would remove barriers girls and women face in the place that is meant to empower them, their community. Through the prioritization of engagement and inclusivity, our community, and the relationships between women and others will be strengthened and supported.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

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**Testimony In SUPPORT of SB3238 SD1**

Committee on Higher Education

Representative Andrew Takuya Garrett, Chair  
Representative Terez Amato, Vice Chair

**LATE**

Hearing Date: March 16, 2026

Dear Chair Andrew Takuya Garrett, Vice Chair Terez Amato, and members of the Committee on Higher Education,

My name is Jeremiah Brown, and I am the multilingual learners program coordinator at Waipahu High School. I am writing in strong support of SB3238 SD1, which establishes a statewide Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawai'i.

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

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

SB3238 SD1 directly addresses this need, a need that was made clear during the pandemic and the aftermath of the Maui wildfires. By creating a structured, statewide program that builds on the Seal of Biliteracy and provides training and paid internship opportunities, this bill validates students' linguistic skills while also protecting the communities they serve. It transforms what is currently informal, uneven, and often uncompensated labor into a professional pathway that benefits both students and the State of Hawai'i.

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

From my experience in schools, I can say with confidence that there is both student interest and workforce need for a program like the one proposed in SB3238 SD1. My school alone sends out dozens of multilingual graduates into the workforce every year. This bill builds on existing successes, such as the Seal of Biliteracy, and thoughtfully extends them into higher education and workforce development.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support SB3238 SD1. Mahalo for your time, your consideration, and your continued commitment to equity, access, and opportunity for Hawai'i's diverse communities.

Respectfully,

Jeremiah Brown  
Multilingual Learners program coordinator  
Waipahu High School

March 15, 2026

**LATE**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee,

My name is Debra Andres Arellano, and I am submitting testimony again to express my strong support for SB 3238. I draw upon my 15 years of experience as an educator and a former board member of Kaibigan ng Lahaina, a culturally responsive disaster response organization founded after the Lahaina wildfires. I am currently an Instructor of Ilokano Language for UH Maui College, however, I am submitting this testimony today as a private citizen.

As a former administrator, I can attest that our primary duty has always been to the families in our community. However, we have never been able to fully nurture our multilingual students in a way that allows them to support our community because we have never received the necessary support from the state through an established fund or pathway.

Throughout my career, I have seen an increase in Ilokano heritage learners gaining interest in learning their native language, but there is currently no clear avenue for gainful employment for these students once they reach proficiency. Since 2017, the HDOE has awarded the State Seal of Biliteracy to over 3,000 students, but there is still no established pathway for these graduates to transition into the workforce as qualified interpreters and translators. These students represent a "valuable pipeline," yet their linguistic wealth remains an underutilized resource.

SB 3238 provides the solution by establishing a language access education and workforce development program at the University of Hawaii. This program will create meaningful career opportunities and develop a qualified bilingual workforce to serve Hawaii's diverse communities. By providing a structured curriculum and paid internship opportunities, this bill transforms a student's linguistic skills into a marketable professional asset.

The Lahaina wildfires underscored that language access is a fundamental requirement for equitable access to healthcare and emergency services. While we have language access laws, state agencies often struggle to provide services because the demand for qualified professionals far outstrips the current supply.

In addition, professional translation requires specialized training in ethics and technical standards that goes beyond mere bilingualism. I respectfully urge you to pass SB3238 to invest in our heritage learners and fulfill our state's commitment to meaningful language access. It is an investment in our local talent and will help fulfill our state's commitment to meaningful language access.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Debra Andres Arellano*

Debra Andres Arellano

**LATE**

**SB-3238-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 3:36:25 AM

Testimony for HED on 3/16/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcella Alohalani Boido	Individual	Comments	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

To: Chair, Rep. Garret; Vice-chair Rep. Amato

Members, House Committee on Higher Education

When: March 16, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

Location: Conference Room 309

Re: **SB 3238 SD 1. Comments.**

Good afternoon. Thank you for hearing this bill.

Since 2007, I have been a Hawai'i Judiciary Certified Spanish Court Interpreter (Tier 4). My work experience from the 1980s on includes interpreting for international conferences. In 1989 I started working in federal court here, and since 1990, in state courts. My translations have been accepted in every venue to which they were given, including immigration courts. My work as a subcontractor in forensic transcription and translation has been used in major cases on the mainland. I have done this type of work as well as document translation for the federal court here, and served as an expert witness.

There are fifteen (15) certified or higher tier spoken language court interpreters in Hawai'i. Four of them on Oahu are both more experienced and more highly credentialed than I am. One of them is a certified healthcare interpreter and trains healthcare interpreters over the internet.

My writings on court interpreter ethics have been incorporated into the official manuals for at least two USA states, as well as Finland and Queensland, Australia. For a Hawai'i state Office on Language Access (OLA) conference, I gave a talk on ethics for translators.

I have participated in five different intern programs. My roles: intern, administrator, teacher. These experiences taught me how internships can be valuable, positive, learning experiences. They can also go wrong, with interns being given nothing but scut work, or being ignored or sidelined because of prejudice against an intern based on race, gender, or age. There can be poor planning, or lack of appropriate supervision.

It requires thoughtful work and preparation to run a good internship program.

**This bill is well intentioned, but based on multiple mistaken assumptions. Those mistaken assumptions make the internship program it proposes deeply, fatally flawed. More thinking and research, leading to major revisions, are needed to create a good internship program that may help with workforce development.**

**Generic training, that is, training conducted in English, on topics such as ethics, standards, and best practices, does not produce competent interpreters or translators.** It functions to produce people who are more attentive to these issues, or so we hope.

The standard recommendation for generic trainings is for 40 hours, minimum. For healthcare interpreters, some advocates prefer 60 hours. I am a graduate of a nationally known program, The Community Interpreter®. Following another 40 hours of training, I was given a license to teach this program. UHM does not have staff to teach the proposed generic training program.

**Interpreting (spoken work) and translation (written work) are skills.**

**Some people are natural interpreters. Some need training, preferably language-specific. Some people cannot develop the skills, regardless of training and/or study.**

**It takes a high level of bilingualism to do interpretation and/or translation.** Generally, for interpreters, a level of at least two years of college education is considered the minimum. Most competent interpreters are educated to the bachelors level at the least.

**To develop interpreting skills, language-specific skills training is generally needed.** The UH system does not have the staff do this kind of training. KCC does do this for ASL.

Prof. Lucia Aranda teaches an upper division course in Spanish translation. If there is another language-specific course in translation at UHM, I do not know about it.

Translators have what we call a *direction*. They should work from their second (weaker) language into their first (stronger) language. The Seal of Bilingual graduates are probably born and educated in the USA. That normally means that their direction would be from their Language Other Than English (LOTE) into English. This bill expects to have interns working from English into their LOTE—not the correct direction, and a violation of standards, ethics, and best practices.

For guidance on how to get translations done, see <https://www.atanet.org/client-assistance/buying-language-services>.

Section 2 (h) of this bill gives priority in entrance to the proposed generic training program to the Seal of Bilingual graduates. There is no good justification for this. People achieve a high level of bilingualism in various ways. These may include formal study, living and studying abroad, being raised to speak two or more languages. All are valid.

An internship program that places interns in non-profit agencies or government offices could provide valuable learning experiences to monolingual and bilingual interns alike. The interns

could learn about the work done in these settings, and could help with some of it. Learning how to do some of the work in their LOTE, under supervision, would be okay.

However, to expect the bilingual interns to do interpretation or translation is to create possible legal liability.

**Schools do not certify interpreters or translators, just as they do not license doctors or lawyers.**

Agencies can do something to improve the translations of their documents. They should translate their documents into what is called Plain English or Simple English. OLA has twice brought in experts to teach how to do this. Their talks were filmed. In the past, those videos, and some supporting written materials, were available on the OLA web site.

I can see the problems this bill hopes to solve. Unfortunately, although I am sympathetic to these concerns, it doesn't look to me as if this bill can fulfill what it promises. I'm sorry to say this.

There is a lot more to say about this bill. For now, I hope this is a good start, and that you find it useful. Please feel free to send me your questions.

Thank you for reading these comments and hearing this bill.

Aloha,

Marcella Alohalani Boido, M.A.

Hawai'i State Judiciary Certified Spanish Court Interpreter (Tier 4)

Licensed Trainer, The Community Interpreter®

**LATE**

**Testimony of Terrina Wong  
In SUPPORT of SB3238**

**Representative Garrett, Chair  
Representative Amato, Vice Chair**

My name is Terrina Wong and I submit this testimony in support of SB3238, a bill that establishes a statewide language access education and workforce development program at the University of Hawai‘i.

I recently retired as the Deputy Director of Immigration and Social Services at Pacific Gateway Center. I served as Chair of the Language Access Advisory Council of the Office of Language Access and as a presenter to Waipahu High School’s Multilingual Marauders under the tutelage of its teacher, Jeremiah Brown. I also served on many ad hoc language access committees during Covid-19 and the Maui Wildfires. I was authorized to conduct immigration legal services as an Accredited Representative with the Department of Justice for Pacific Gateway Center since 2018 to ensure access to justice for low-income immigrants. As such, my daily interaction with the foreign-born provides me with first-hand knowledge of the importance of having trained interpreters and translators to support this vulnerable sector of our community.

I am testifying as an individual and do not represent the University of Hawaii and I am pleased to offer this testimony on behalf of myself as a civically engaged and concerned individual citizen for the well-being of our community.

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

The norms of our State inherently value our multilingual, multicultural community. However, we also recognize that the 1 out of 5 foreign-born residents in Hawaii are disproportionately at-risk and we must find ways to ensure our community who speaks English “less than very well” have access to good and trusted information.

SB3238 provides a structural framework to address the shortage of qualified interpreters and translators. We must learn from the pandemic and the Maui wildfires that have taught us we were not able to satisfactorily meet the needs of the limited English proficient due to the shortage of qualified interpreters and translators. The bill’s emphasis on the Department of Education’s Seal of Biliteracy is a practical way to keep local talent in the islands. It transforms a student’s existing linguistic skills that honor their heritage languages and proficiency in English into a marketable professional asset, providing a clear bridge from high school to a career in public service or healthcare.

The integration with the Hele Imua internship program through the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations ensures that participants receive hands-on experience in public service settings, including agriculture and social services, while potentially receiving the financial support necessary to complete their education.

Ensuring that every resident can understand their doctor, participate in their child's education, and navigate the legal system is a matter of statewide concern and constitutional duty. This bill creates a "win-win" scenario: it strengthens our workforce development and ensures that our most vulnerable non-English speaking residents are treated with the dignity and clarity they deserve.

I urge you to support this measure. Our methods of communication of critical information must be accessible and equitable to all Hawaii residents. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Terrina Wong

**LATE**

**SB-3238-SD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 9:37:26 AM

Testimony for HED on 3/16/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Manglallan-Yang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I submit this testimony in support of SB3238 SD1, which establishes a Language Access Education and Workforce Development Program at the University of Hawai‘i and appropriates funds to build Hawai‘i’s interpreter and translator workforce statewide.

I am an OB/GYN physician based in Maui, and English was my second language when I moved to the United States as a child. I depended on language access education resources to become the physician that I am today. Now I provide full-scope reproductive healthcare to patients throughout the state. Many of our patients identify their preferred language as other than English, but providing high quality care is limited by the lack of adequate language services. In the setting of pregnancy and gynecology where patients are in a very vulnerable state, miscommunication and communication barriers are especially harmful.

Language access is essential for equitable access to healthcare, education, legal services, emergency information, and government programs in Hawai‘i. Navigating the healthcare system, even for someone who speaks perfect English but has relatively low literacy in healthcare jargon, can be tricky. Having to do that in a completely different language adds an extraordinary challenge. Removing barriers for our patients will help to improve engagement and timely access to care.

There remains a significant unmet need for qualified interpreting and translation services across the State. SB3238 SD1 is a practical workforce solution: it creates a structured, statewide pipeline through the University of Hawai‘i to train interpreters and translators with the ethics, standards, and best practices required for high-stakes public service settings.

Bilingual ability alone is not the same as professional interpreting or translation. This bill strengthens quality and safety by building a trained workforce, while also creating career pathways for multilingual students and community members. It is a “win-win” for Hawai‘i: stronger public services and stronger workforce development. Having passed the Senate, SB3238 SD1 now has the opportunity to move forward in the House—and the Committee on Higher Education is the right place to champion this investment.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee PASS SB3238 SD1 and fully fund the program.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

