



**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

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April 14, 2026

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair
Representative Sue L. Keohokapu-Loy, Vice Chair
Honorable Members

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

**RE: SCR 63-SD1 -- RELATING TO DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION
ACCESS BOARD**

HEARING: Thursday, April 16, 2026 @ 09:45 am; Conference Room 329

POSITION: SUPPORT with COMMENTS

Testimony:

SHPDA agrees that patients who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deaf-blind should be provided with auxiliary aids and services, including qualified sign language interpreters, to ensure effective communication. Identifying those needs to include patient preference, site specific needs, legal duties and other work, health, and living requirements.

Hawaii faces a growing number of hard of hearing residents amid its aging population with tens of thousands already affected statewide. Hearing loss significantly impacts health outcomes and quality of life, often exacerbating isolation and chronic conditions.

State data indicate tens of thousands of Hawaii residents experience some degree of hearing loss, including many with serious difficulties. This aligns with demographic projections showing Hawaii's population aged 65 + rising from 200,712 in 2020 to 215,570 by 2030 (24.4% of total population), driving higher prevalence as hearing impairment increases sharply with age. Untreated hearing loss raises risks of cognitive decline, dementia (up to 5x higher) falls, and hospitalizations as it limits communication and early detection of health issues. It correlates with depression,

SCR 63-SD1: testimony of SHPDA (2026), continued

anxiety, and poorer management of comorbidities like diabetes or heart disease in seniors. In Hawaii's island context, access barriers amplify these effects for rural populations.

Hearing difficulties lead to social isolation, reduced independence and lower life satisfaction, straining family caregivers and increasing long term care demands. Daily challenges include misunderstandings in conversations, missing safety cues or exclusion from community events, and worsening mental health. Early interventions like hearing aids can mitigate up to 90% of these impacts, yet affordability remains a hurdle.

A study of the communication needs of deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind would provide direction, identify current resources and identify gaps. This would lead to better care. SHPDA defers to the Disability and Communication Access Board on the specifics, details and costs.

Finally, we also strongly support SCR 63-SD1 to provide an accurate and needed statewide assessment of the *numbers of citizens* affected by hearing loss, and an assessment of diagnostic and therapeutic health services available to improve hearing loss where feasible.

Thank you for hearing this measure.

■ -- 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
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April 16, 2026

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOMELESSNESS AND ON HEALTH

Senate Concurrent Resolution 63 Senate Draft 1 - Requesting the Disability and Communication Access Board to Study the Communication Needs of Individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind in Health Care Settings and Make Necessary Revisions to the Guidance for Health Care Providers.

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Concurrent Resolution 63 Senate Draft 1 – Requesting the Disability and Communication Access Board to Study the Communication Needs of Individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind in Health Care Settings and Make Necessary Revisions to the Guidance for Health Care Providers

Patients who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deaf-blind often encounter significant communication challenges in health care settings, especially at the hospital or when transitioning to a skilled nursing facility. It is the communication that can lead to misunderstandings about treatment plans, delayed care, and even safety risks during transitions between facilities.

The study will identify communication needs, evaluate current practices, and provide recommendations to improve guidance for health care providers to ensure effective communication.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

KRISTINE PAGANO
Acting Executive Director

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/13/2026 9:10:58 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

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

Comments:

Support.



LATE

April 15, 2026

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair Senate Committee on Health and Human Services The Thirty-Third Legislature State Capitol Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

SUBJECT: SCR63 — Requesting the Disability and Communication Access Board to Study Health Care Communication Needs of Individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind

Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

The Comprehensive Service Center (CSC) submits this testimony in strong support of SCR63. CSC is a one-stop support and referral service funded by the Hawai'i State Legislature and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation through a contract with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Center on Disability Studies. Our goal is to provide comprehensive, accessible services that address the diverse needs of individuals with hearing loss, their families, and the broader community — through academic offerings, workshops, peer support groups, and accessibility initiatives that ensure every individual is valued, respected, and encouraged to participate fully.

Through this work, CSC is regularly positioned at the intersection of community need and systemic gap — and few gaps are as consequential as communication access in health care settings. While federal and state law, including the ADA, already require effective communication in medical settings, the shortage of qualified sign language interpreters in Hawai'i means those requirements are too often unmet in practice.

Effective communication is not a courtesy; it is a clinical necessity. A patient's ability to understand their diagnosis, participate meaningfully in their care, provide informed consent, and safely transition back to their home and community depends entirely on whether that communication is accessible. When qualified interpreters or appropriate auxiliary aids are absent, the consequences include misdiagnosis, delayed treatment, and compromised discharge planning.

We strongly support SCR63 to direct the Disability and Communication Access Board to study these needs, update guidance for health care providers, and report findings and potential legislation before the 2027 Regular Session. We respectfully ask that the study center the lived experiences of individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind, and that resulting guidelines provide health care facilities with clear, practical direction for honoring patient communication preferences and ensuring qualified services are in place.

CSC stands ready to support this work and to connect the Disability and Communication Access Board with the individuals and communities whose experiences should be at the heart of this study.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalind Kia

Project Coordinator Comprehensive Service Center | CSC Hawaii
Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 9:57:16 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alexis Bigler	DCAB	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

REQUESTING THE DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD TO STUDY THE COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, OR DEAF-BLIND IN HEALTH CARE SETTINGS AND MAKE NECESSARY REVISIONS TO THE GUIDANCE FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/14/2026 4:51:46 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lila Mower	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this resolution.

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 7:37:12 AM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joshua Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members,

My name is Joshua Smith. I am a Deaf and Deaf rights advocate.

I am writing in support of SCR 63, which requests that the Disability and Communication Access Board study the communication needs of Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind individuals in healthcare settings.

From my personal experience, many healthcare providers and businesses do not fully understand how to provide effective communication access, including how to request and schedule ASL interpreters. I recently experienced this during a medical appointment in February, where no interpreter was provided. I had to educate the staff myself on how to request an interpreter. The appointment was then postponed to March 24 to allow time for the request. However, when I followed up on March 16, I learned that the request had not been submitted, even though I had clearly explained the process. The appointment was postponed again to April 8, and I was finally provided with an interpreter on that date.

This experience was frustrating and discouraging. As a citizen, I should not have to educate providers on their responsibilities under the ADA. Situations like this show a gap between knowledge and practice, even when laws and guidelines already exist.

This bill is important because it focuses on studying the problem first. As stated in the resolution, there is a shortage of qualified interpreters and a need for better guidance for providers. A study will help identify gaps in availability, awareness, and communication practices.

Based on my experience and conversations with community members, this is an ongoing issue in Hawai'i. I strongly support SCR 63 because it will help identify these gaps and lead to better education for healthcare providers, enabling them to better support Deaf individuals.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Joshua Smith
Deaf Rights Advocate

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

My name is Nicolette Choi, and I am submitting testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **SCR63**.

Patients who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind need access to communication supports, especially qualified sign language interpreters, to ensure care is actually understandable and usable. This isn't just a general accessibility issue. It directly affects whether patients can give informed consent, describe symptoms accurately, and follow treatment plans. Figuring out when an interpreter is needed should center patient preference, but it also has to account for the clinical setting and legal obligations.

In Hawai'i, this need is becoming more urgent as the population ages and the number of people with hearing loss continues to grow. While not everyone with hearing loss uses sign language, for those who do, interpreters are essential. Without them, communication often gets reduced to written notes or lip reading, which are not reliable substitutes, especially in medical settings where information can be complex or time-sensitive.

The consequences of not having interpreters available show up pretty quickly. Patients may misunderstand diagnoses, miss key instructions, or avoid seeking care altogether because communication feels too difficult or frustrating. Over time, that can contribute to worse health outcomes, including delayed treatment, more frequent hospitalizations, and poorer management of chronic conditions. There are also mental health impacts tied to feeling excluded or not fully heard in clinical encounters.

Access barriers in Hawai'i make this more complicated. Rural areas and neighbor islands often have limited availability of qualified interpreters, and relying on ad hoc solutions like family members or untrained staff raises concerns about accuracy, privacy, and quality of care. Expanding interpreter services, including through telehealth when appropriate, is one of the more direct ways to improve equity in healthcare access for this population.

At a basic level, having qualified sign language interpreters available is about making sure patients can fully participate in their own care. Without that, even well-resourced health systems fall short.

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 9:39:54 AM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marlena	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a Deaf individual and unable to hear or speak. Although I am very good at writing, I prefer to have an interpreter especially after experiencing a stroke last year. During that time, I was completely alone without an interpreter and didn't realize I was having a stroke until later, when my husband informed me and demanded that one be provided.

The hospital staff seemed unsure of how to properly arrange for an interpreter and were scrambling to find one. A nurse suggested using a VRI (Video Remote Interpreter), which allowed me to finally understand what the doctor was saying and ask questions. Through VRI, I requested an in-person interpreter, and once one was provided, it made a significant difference. I received better support, clearer communication, and a more personal, one-on-one experience. The interpreter also helped explain my care, including physical therapy.

Deaf individuals absolutely need interpreters. I respectfully ask that you please provide one. We have already faced many barriers and challenge please do not take this essential access away from us.

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 10:29:26 AM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dane Silva-Ewan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Human Services & Homeless and Health,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 63 (S.D. 1), which requests the Disability and Communication Access Board to study the communication needs of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind in health care settings and to update guidance for providers.

Effective communication in health care is not optional, it is a legal and ethical necessity. Federal law under the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as Hawaii state law, clearly requires that individuals with communication disabilities receive equal access to information and services. However, in practice, many deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind patients continue to face barriers when seeking medical care.

Even though laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act already require effective communication, reality often falls short. Hospitals sometimes do not provide interpreters. They may rely on family members, which is often not appropriate or allowed. They may use the wrong type of communication, despite the fact that not all deaf individuals use the same method. Additionally, there is a shortage of qualified interpreters in Hawaii. These gaps can lead to serious consequences, including misdiagnosis, patients not fully understanding their treatment, and ultimately unsafe or unequal care.

This resolution is especially important because it recognizes several critical realities:

- There is a shortage of qualified sign language and tactile interpreters in Hawaii.**
- Communication needs vary widely among individuals, requiring personalized and patient-centered approaches.**
- Health care providers often lack clear, updated guidance on how to meet their legal obligations effectively.**
- Patients in hospital and inpatient settings may face even greater communication challenges during vulnerable moments.**

By calling for a comprehensive study, this resolution takes a thoughtful and necessary step toward improving health outcomes, patient safety, and dignity. It will also help ensure that health care providers are better equipped with practical guidance to comply with the law and serve patients appropriately.

I strongly urge the committees to support this resolution and prioritize meaningful improvements in communication access across Hawaii's health care system. Every patient deserves to be fully informed, understood, and respected, especially when it comes to their and my health.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to equity and accessibility.

Sincerely,

Dane "Kila" Silva-Ewan

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 11:50:42 AM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Renee Trempe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Require ASL interpreters for Deaf patients. Communicate translations each other clarifying. Make sure Deaf patients are safe and comfortable zone instead of Doctors, nurses and facilities neglected Deaf patients. Deaf patients feel suffering? No. They have their rights. Maybe lawsuit if no provider ASL interpreters. Same thing with foreigners wanted their interpreters, too. No misunderstanding. No miscommunication. No deprivation ASL language. Respect Deaf, hard of hearing and disabilities. Mahalo

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 12:19:44 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
holly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a deaf individual, so I support this bill and without it, we'd struggle. we need all support we have for the healthcare system. Thank you.

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 12:19:52 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ofeira Walmer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ofeira Walmer, and I am a student currently enrolled in ASL 102 at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. As someone who is just beginning to learn American Sign Language, I have quickly come to understand the vital role that skilled, culturally competent interpreters play in bridging communication gaps for the Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and DeafBlind communities. Hawai‘i faces a severe shortage of qualified ASL interpreters—only about 23 are state-credentialed statewide—leaving many individuals without reliable access to education, healthcare, legal services, and everyday community participation. Establishing a bachelor’s degree program in ASL interpretation at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, with a pathway toward a master’s program, would create a sustainable local pipeline of interpreters who understand our unique island communities and are more likely to remain in Hawai‘i long-term. I strongly urge the legislature and relevant boards to support funding for this program so that future generations of Deaf Hawaiians can fully participate in society with dignity and equal access. As an emerging ASL student, I am committed to being an ally and believe this investment will benefit not only the Deaf community but all of Hawai‘i.

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 1:17:56 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diana Huizar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Support of SCR 63

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of SCR 63, requesting that the Disability and Communication Access Board study the communication needs of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind in health care settings and make necessary revisions to guidance for health care providers.

Effective communication in health care is not optional—it is essential to safe, ethical, and equitable care. For individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, communication barriers can lead to misunderstandings about diagnoses, improper treatment, medication errors, and an overall lack of informed consent. These are not minor inconveniences; they are serious risks to patient health and dignity.

Despite existing laws and guidelines, there remains a significant gap between policy and practice. Too often, patients are asked to rely on written notes, lip reading, or family members instead of being provided qualified interpreters or appropriate communication access. These substitutes are inadequate and can compromise both accuracy and confidentiality.

A comprehensive study, as proposed in SCR 63, is a necessary and timely step. It will help identify where current systems are failing, gather input directly from impacted individuals, and provide actionable recommendations to improve communication access across health care settings. Updating guidance based on real data and lived experiences will better equip providers to meet their legal and ethical responsibilities.

Ensuring effective communication is not only a matter of compliance—it is a matter of respect, equity, and patient safety. Every individual deserves to fully understand their health, participate in their care, and be treated with dignity.

I urge you to support SCR 63 and take this important step toward improving health care access for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Diana Huizar

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 1:47:01 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Steinlein-Balding	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We need interpreters to have a full understanding & that's an equality for us. That's a part of human rights.

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 1:53:45 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaden Mack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Kaden Mack, and I am a resident of Hawai‘i. I am writing in strong support of SCR 63.

Effective communication in health care is essential to patient safety and quality care. While laws already require equal access, there are still gaps in how communication needs are met for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. This resolution takes an important step by studying those gaps and improving guidance for health care providers.

The shortage of qualified interpreters in Hawai‘i makes this issue even more urgent. By examining interpreter availability, patient preferences, and communication needs in hospital settings, SCR 63 helps ensure more equitable and effective care for all patients.

This is a practical and proactive measure that strengthens our health care system. I respectfully urge the Legislature to adopt SCR 63.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Kaden Mack

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 1:58:30 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Dieker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom this may concern,

My name is Caroline Dieker. I am currently a Psychology Undergraduate student and intermediate American Sign Language student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. I am testifying in favor of SCR63.

I am taking this position because as a hearing individual studying Deaf culture, Deaf community, and American Sign Language which many Deaf individual use to communicate, I have learned so much about the lack of access that so many of these people in the Deaf community face. I have come to see and realize how many other people, like myself prior to becoming an ASL student, do not realize how large this lack of accessibility is. When I say accessibility I mean all the way from captions at movie theatres to being able to revieve one might need at the doctors office. A big reason for this happening due to a shortage in interpreters!

This bill, SCR63, is not just about additional resources. It is about equity and quality of life for all individual regardless of their disabilities.

Thank you.

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 5:36:42 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nikki Kepoo	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair and committee members,

I am writing to request your full support to SCR63 and all measures relating to accessibility in healthcare settings for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf blind.

There is a severe gap in receiving timely, effective, and accurate communication between the patient who is DHHDB and a provider. I've experienced the issues firsthand and was heartbroken to know there was more concern in the cost and energy to obtain an interpreter than there was for the patient.

Please support this in an effort to provide sufficient healthcare to our DHHDB community.

mahalo,

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 6:09:52 PM
Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Fiona Ritter	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair and Members,

I am writing in support of SCR63. I believe this resolution is important for improving our community and addressing issues that impact people in Hawai'i. As a student, I think it is important that our state continues to take action on issues that affect our future and well-being.

Supporting SCR63 shows a commitment to positive change and to listening to the needs of the community. I appreciate the opportunity to share my testimony and encourage you to pass this resolution.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 6:41:16 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gisella Tomita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gisella Tomita, and I'm writing in strong support of SCR63.

This is personal for me. I come from a Deaf family, my parents are Deaf kūpuna living on Maui, while my Deaf sister and I are on O'ahu. As they get older, I think a lot about what will happen when they need more medical care, and honestly, it worries me.

Maui doesn't have enough qualified ASL interpreters. Too often, interpreters have to be flown in from O'ahu, or appointments get pushed back. In healthcare, that kind of delay isn't just frustrating, it can be dangerous. If my parents end up in the hospital or in hospice without consistent access to a qualified interpreter, there's a real risk their health could suffer simply because they can't fully communicate. Understanding diagnoses, treatment options, and giving informed consent all depend on clear communication.

There are also gaps in how healthcare providers are prepared to work with Deaf patients. Many providers don't receive enough training on how to communicate effectively with Deaf individuals or how to properly use interpreters in medical settings. There's a real need for more training and education, both in basic ASL and in Deaf cultural competency, so providers can deliver care that is respectful, accessible, and safe. Improving these skills across the healthcare system would make a meaningful difference for patients like my parents.

Even if my sister and I are there with them, we would still need qualified interpreters to make sure nothing is missed. That's the part that weighs on me the most, the possibility that my parents, others in the Deaf community, my Deaf sister, or I won't be able to communicate during the most critical moments of their lives.

I'm also Deaf, and I teach American Sign Language at the University of Hawai'i. Through my work, I'm trying to build up the next generation of ASL users and encourage students to go into fields like healthcare where these skills are urgently needed. This isn't just my family's issue, it's something affecting communities across our islands.

SCR63 is a meaningful step toward closing these gaps. It supports better access to qualified interpreters and also highlights the importance of training healthcare providers to work effectively with Deaf patients. Together, these efforts help ensure that Deaf, Hard of Hearing,

and DeafBlind individuals in Hawai'i can receive the care they deserve with full communication access.

I respectfully ask for your support of SCR63. This matters for the health, safety, and dignity of our community.

Mahalo nui loa,
Gisella Tomita

Dear State Legislature,

LATE

I am writing this letter with the direct support of SCR 63 SD1.

I am personally taking ASL classes during my time at UH Manoa which has revealed the severe impact of this state having a shortage of interpreters. It is truly harming the deaf community and I believe that DCAB is on a progressive mission to solve this problem. I believe that every person deserves the right and opportunity to have a clear concise relationship with healthcare providers. It is essential for the safety of all community members to receive the same ethical experience when entering health care facilities. The shortage of ASL interpreters puts risks on people's lives as they often cannot communicate effectively. I support this resolution as it encourages equal access to all.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Athena Velazquez

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 7:04:38 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mariah	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SCR63, which requests the Disability and Communication Access Board to study and improve communication access for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind in health care settings. Effective communication is not optional in medicine. Everyone deserves to fully understand their health, treatment options, and rights. Supporting SCR63 affirms a commitment to dignity, accessibility, and patient-centered care for all residents of Hawai'i. I respectfully urge its adoption.

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 8:14:02 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Trudy Morita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Committee and Members,

Aloha!

I am writing in strong support of SCR-63.

As I am a Deaf kupuna, I worry about the day when I may need service and cannot communicate clearly. Too often individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind face barriers that delay care, create confusion and leave them feeling excluded.

DCAB is a trusted agency that understands accessibility laws and the real needs of our community. This study is necessary to identify gaps and ensure that no one is left behind.

I want to live with dignity, independence, and equal access-just like every other citizen in Hawai'i.

Please support SCR-63.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Trudy Morita,

Wailuku, Maui

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 8:47:53 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Benz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Lauren Benz, and I am the mother of a Deaf 3-year-old child whose primary and only language is American Sign Language (ASL).

Currently, Hawai'i is facing a significant shortage of essential professionals serving the Deaf community—particularly qualified ASL interpreters. My child attends numerous medical appointments, more than many people may experience, and far too often we are left without access to an interpreter. In those moments, I am forced to interpret as a hearing parent who is still emerging in ASL, trying to communicate complex medical terminology that is unfamiliar to me.

Because of this barrier, there are times when I am unable to fully and accurately communicate what is happening during appointments. This not only impacts my understanding, but more importantly, it affects my child's ability to feel safe, informed, and comfortable. As a result, my son can become distressed during medical visits because he does not fully understand what is happening or why procedures are being done.

I ask you to consider: if you were unable to hear or see, would you feel comfortable having others make decisions on your behalf without clear communication?

Passing SCR63 will help ensure that healthcare providers recognize the importance of proactively scheduling qualified interpreters for Deaf patients. It will also encourage the development of stronger protocols within emergency departments to better serve individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind, especially in urgent situations where immediate communication access is critical.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

LATE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SCR63.

This resolution represents an important step toward addressing critical issues that affect the people of Hawai'i. By advancing the goals outlined in SCR63, the Legislature demonstrates a commitment to thoughtful policy, long-term planning, and the well-being of our communities.

SCR63 is especially significant because it encourages collaboration, transparency, and proactive solutions. At a time when our state faces complex challenges—ranging from economic resilience to environmental stewardship—measures like this help ensure that decisions are guided by data, community input, and shared responsibility.

I support SCR63 because it fosters a framework for progress while respecting Hawai'i's unique cultural, social, and environmental context. It signals a willingness to explore innovative approaches while remaining grounded in the values that make our islands strong.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass SCR63 and continue moving this effort forward. Mahalo for your consideration and for your service to the people of Hawai'i.

Sincerely,
Giselle Toll

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 10:07:57 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kylie Howe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senators,

My name is Kylie Howe and I am in support of the proposed bill. There is an astounding shortage and lack of access to interpreters in the state. There are a lot of obstacles for those who wish to become an interpreter, as there is not currently a recognized program in Hawai'i. Currently, the only option is to travel to the mainland. For many reasons, this dissuades potential suitors and decreases accessibility both for them and the Deaf community. I know those in the Deaf community already have to put in more effort to communicate with those who are hearing, but it is critical that they are able to have access to a proper and effective support system in healthcare. As someone who works in the healthcare field and is involved in the Deaf community, I know firsthand how important it is that they are able to convey their concerns and needs in an efficient manner. Any language discrepancy is considered a barrier to care but it cannot protect providers from their responsibility of proper patient care. Any miscommunication or misunderstanding can lead to dangerous outcomes for patient health, which directly violates the hippocratic oath. Beneficence and nonmaleficence is the essence of healthcare and should implore you to take the steps for equitable access to communication needs for deaf, deaf-blind, and hard-of-hearing individuals.

Thank you for your time.

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 10:45:39 PM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alyssa Acevedo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of SCR 63, which requests the Disability and Communication Access Board to study the communication needs of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind in health care settings and to update guidance for providers.

Clear communication in health care is something that should be available to everyone, it is essential for safety, trust, and quality care. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind often face barriers when trying to understand diagnoses, treatment options, or medical instructions.

Without effective communication, there is a higher risk of misunderstanding, misdiagnosis, and inadequate care. This is not just an inconvenience, it is a health equity issue.

By studying these communication gaps, this bill takes an important step toward identifying where the system is failing and how it can improve. Updating guidance for health care providers will help ensure that patients receive the appropriate accommodations, such as qualified interpreters, assistive technologies, and accessible communication methods. These changes can make a big difference in patient outcomes and overall trust in the health care system.

Overall, SCR 63 supports fairness, safety, and dignity in health care, which I believe everyone deserves.

LATE

Colleen Cidade
1630 Liholiho Street
Honolulu, HI 96822

Subject: HB1800 to 30 for American Sign Language of Hawai'i

Dear Honorable Chairs, Vice Chairs, Members of the Senate Ways and House Finance Committees,

I support and my testimony to bill for ASL in HB1800 to Senates and House Committee members of Hawai'i. Because I am writing to strongly my support for the budget measure appropriating \$140,000 to take the first step in establishing a Bachelor of Arts degree program in American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind are severely impacting our community by limiting equitable access to healthcare, education, and emergency services.

I remember Maui wildfires in August 2023, no ASL interpreter provided as emergency service. It is not fair for the deaf people were scare, confusing and very lack of access information with in the Deaf community. I went there, I tried to help them but I am Deaf. For me and them - frustrated and we were last people to know.

Most of mainland interpreters don't know about Hawai'i Language or Sign Language pidgin or local culture which can don't understanding as limits in person access and community connection.

Language access is very an important because of fundamental civil rights. No one should have to fight for basic communication access in healthcare, education, emergency services or public services.

Hearing people use their ears for to hear...
Deaf people use their eyes for to hear...
Hearing people can talk by their voices...
Deaf people can talk by their hands...

That's why, I support this bill HB1800 for our children futures. No more lack of communication and miscommunication.

Mahalo and with aloha,

Colleen Cidade
Honolulu

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/16/2026 12:07:11 AM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Claudia Madruga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Claudia Madruga, and I am a resident of Honolulu, Hawaii. I am writing in strong support of SCR63 SD1.

I hold a bachelor's degree in Sign Language Interpreting and a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. I also bring over ten years of professional experience working with individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation here in Hawaii.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed ongoing challenges in securing effective communication access for this population. There is a clear shortage of qualified interpreters in Hawaii, and coordinating services is often difficult, even with advance notice.

As a Rehabilitation Counseling Specialist, I have personally worked with clients in hospital settings who requested qualified interpreters, only to be asked to rely on family members or relatives who were not trained or appropriate to interpret complex medical information. This creates serious risks, including miscommunication, loss of confidentiality, and compromised care.

Access to effective communication is not a special accommodation. It is a basic need. It is something many of us take for granted as hearing individuals. Now imagine having to wait for an interpreter while trying to understand sensitive, urgent, or life-altering medical information. This is a reality that many in the deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind communities face.

SCR63, SD1 provides an opportunity to identify these gaps and improve guidance for health care providers. Additionally, strengthening and expanding interpreting services, including support for up-and-coming interpreters, is essential to meeting the growing demand and ensuring equitable access across Hawaii.

This study will help bring these issues to light and guide meaningful improvements in how we serve this community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Claudia Madruga

LATE

SCR-63-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/16/2026 3:00:11 AM

Testimony for HSH on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shari Joy McMahon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Shari, and I'm writing in support of SCR63.

This issue is very real for me right now. My dad is having a hard time finding care that is actually accessible, and it's been frustrating and stressful to watch. When communication isn't clear or consistent, it affects everything - understanding medical information, making decisions, and even basic trust in the care he's getting.

For deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind patients, this happens way too often. There aren't always qualified interpreters available, and other communication supports are inconsistent. That leads to misunderstandings, delays, and sometimes care plans that don't reflect what the person actually wants or needs.

I appreciate that this resolution is asking the Disability and Communication Access Board to take a closer look at these issues and improve guidance for providers. I strongly encourage you to:

- Make sure the study includes real experiences from deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and other disabled individuals
- Look at how communication barriers affect access to home- and community-based care, not just hospital settings
- Create clear, practical guidelines so providers respect patient communication preferences and don't rely on family members as interpreters unless it's absolutely necessary and allowed by law

At the end of the day, this is about dignity, safety, and being able to make informed decisions. No one should struggle to get proper care because communication wasn't accessible.

Thank you for your time and for considering this.

Mahalo,
Shari