
A BILL FOR AN ACT

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATEWIDE
LANGUAGE ACCESS BANK.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. For many people in Hawaii, English is not their
2 primary language, and they have only a limited ability to read,
3 write, speak, or understand English. According to the 2000
4 census, nearly two hundred ninety thousand people, or
5 twenty-four per cent of Hawaii's population, speak a language
6 other than English at home, including more than two hundred
7 fifty thousand people who speak an Asian or Pacific Island
8 language. For persons who are limited English proficient,
9 language barriers prohibit them from fully participating in the
10 community and can undermine their ability to be self-sufficient
11 and productive.

12 Recently, the legislature enacted Act 290, Session Laws of
13 Hawaii 2006, codified as part of chapter 371, Hawaii Revised
14 Statutes, to address the language access needs of limited
15 English proficient persons by, among other things, requiring
16 each state agency to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful
17 access by limited English proficient persons to services,



1 programs, and activities funded and provided by the State. As
2 the lead agency for the State in this regard, the department of
3 labor and industrial relations plays a critical role.

4 All state agencies and other covered entities are required
5 to establish a plan for language access to provide equal,
6 meaningful access to essential government services, such as
7 social services, job training, employment assistance, fair and
8 impartial hearings, and emergency assistance, to all of Hawaii's
9 diverse population.

10 As of October 2007, seventeen language access plans have
11 been completed. As the implementation of the plans approaches,
12 two major stumbling blocks hinder meaningful access to essential
13 government services for persons who are limited English
14 proficient. First, there is no comprehensive system in Hawaii
15 to identify language interpreters and translators and to refer
16 interpreters or translators to the state agencies and other
17 covered entities seeking assistance. Second, there is a lack of
18 trained and certified language interpreters and translators who
19 can meet the demand to assist limited English proficient persons
20 in a timely, meaningful manner.



1 The legislature finds that it is necessary to establish a
2 statewide language access bank to act as a centralized resource
3 to:

4 (1) Compile and maintain a roster of available language
5 interpreters and translators;

6 (2) Match and refer language interpreters and translators
7 to the needs of state agencies and other covered
8 entities seeking assistance;

9 (3) Provide and coordinate training programs to increase
10 the availability of qualified language interpreters
11 and translators; and

12 (4) Standardize the testing and certification of language
13 interpreters and translators to ensure the quality and
14 accuracy of their services.

15 After its initial establishment, a statewide language
16 access bank could become self-sustaining by collecting user
17 fees, subscription and training fees, and support from the
18 resources available to state agencies and other covered entities
19 seeking language interpreter and translator assistance.

20 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to
21 establish a statewide access language bank.



1 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
 2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$189,500 or so much
 3 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 for the
 4 department of labor and industrial relations to establish a
 5 statewide language access bank to ensure meaningful access by
 6 limited English proficient persons to state-funded programs and
 7 activities.

8 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
 9 labor and industrial relations for the purposes of this Act.

10 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2008.

11

INTRODUCED BY:

John M. Reynolds
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JAN 17 2008



Report Title:

Appropriation; Statewide Language Access Bank

Description:

Appropriates funds to establish a statewide language access bank to help state agencies and other covered entities provide meaningful access to essential government services to limited English proficient persons.

