

JAN 22 2007

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that most individuals
2 living in Hawaii read, write, speak, and understand English.
3 However, there are many individuals who are limited English
4 proficient, meaning the individuals, on account of national
5 origin, do not speak English as their primary language and
6 identify themselves as having a limited ability to read, write,
7 speak, or understand the English language. Language for limited
8 English proficient persons can be a barrier to accessing
9 important emergency services, such as medical care and law
10 enforcement.

11 According to the 2000 United States Census survey, over
12 twenty-six per cent of Hawaii's population speaks a language
13 other than English. The majority of immigrants to Hawaii arrive
14 from Asia and the Pacific Islands. Of those whose primary
15 language is an Asian or Pacific Island language, it is estimated
16 that over twenty per cent are limited English proficient.



1 Currently, if an individual who is limited English
2 proficient calls the emergency 911 telephone number, the
3 individual may not be able to communicate the individual's needs
4 to the operator or answer questions that facilitate the delivery
5 of critical emergency services. Other jurisdictions have made
6 great strides in improving multi-lingual access to emergency and
7 other important services or benefits. For instance, all members
8 of Toronto, Canada's diverse communities have access to life-
9 saving emergency 911 services in more than one hundred fifty
10 languages. The operators there have instant access to
11 interpreters who speak many languages.

12 The Civil Rights Division of the United States Department
13 of Justice provides limited English proficiency resources to
14 assist federal, state, and local government in the provision of
15 language assistance to limited English proficient individuals,
16 including recommendations specific to emergency 911 telephone
17 systems. For instance, recommendations include recruiting
18 bilingual call takers and dispatchers, contracting with
19 telephonic interpretation services, or establishing a city- or
20 county-wide bank of city or county employees who are bilingual
21 and who can provide translation services when necessary.



1 The purpose of this Act is to require the counties to
2 develop and implement a plan for multi-lingual access to the
3 emergency 911 telephone system, and to appropriate funds for
4 that purpose.

5 SECTION 2. (a) Each county shall develop and implement a
6 plan for multi-lingual access to the emergency 911 telephone
7 system.

8 (b) In developing and implementing the plan, each county
9 shall:

- 10 (1) Consult with the Civil Rights Division of the United
11 States Department of Justice, the department of
12 health, the office of language access, the other
13 counties, and applicable emergency services and law
14 enforcement agencies;
- 15 (2) Research best practices, including how other
16 jurisdictions provide multi-lingual access to
17 emergency 911 telephone systems;
- 18 (3) Provide for quality control and regular assessment of
19 the provision of multi-lingual access; and
- 20 (4) Request any federal funding that may be available for
21 the development or implementation of the plan.



1 SECTION 3. Each county shall submit an interim report to
 2 the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening
 3 of the 2008 regular session, and shall submit a final report,
 4 including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later
 5 than twenty days prior to the convening of the 2009 regular
 6 session.

7 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
 8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the following sums, or so much
 9 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2007-2008, and the
 10 same sums, or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
 11 year 2008-2009, to assist the counties in implementing this Act:

12	City and county of Honolulu	\$
13	County of Kauai	\$
14	County of Maui	\$
15	County of Hawaii	\$
16	Total	\$

17 The sums appropriated shall be expended by each county for
 18 the purposes of this Act.

19 SECTION 5. The sums appropriated shall constitute the
 20 State's share of the cost of mandated programs under article
 21 VIII, section 5, of the state constitution.



1 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2007.

2

INTRODUCED BY: *Suzanne Chun Oakland*



Report Title:

Language Access; Multi-lingual Emergency Services

Description:

Requires each county to develop and implement a plan for multi-lingual access to the emergency 911 telephone system; appropriates funds for that purpose.

