# SENATE RESOLUTION

URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO DECLARE SEPTEMBER AS LANGUAGE ACCESS
MONTH.

1    WHEREAS, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42
2  U.S.C. §2000d ("Title VI"), provides that "[n]o person in the
3  United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national
4  origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit
5  of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or
6  activity receiving Federal financial assistance."; and
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8    WHEREAS, according to the 2000 Census, two hundred ninety
9  thousand of Hawaii's 1,200,000 people, or approximately twenty-
10 four per cent of the population, speak a language other than
11 English at home, including over two hundred fifty thousand
12 persons who speak an Asian or Pacific Island language; and
13
14    WHEREAS, for this portion of Hawaii's population for whom
15 English is not their primary language and who have identified
16 themselves as having limited English proficiency ("LEP"),
17 language is a barrier that often prohibits them from fully
18 participating in the community and undermines their efforts to
19 become self-sufficient and productive; and
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21    WHEREAS, in 2006, the Legislature recognized and
22 acknowledged that language is a barrier for LEP individuals
23 living in Hawaii and enacted Hawaii's language access law, Act
24 290, Session Laws of Hawaii 2006, later codified as sections
25 371-31 to 371-37, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and
26
27    WHEREAS, Hawaii's language access law seeks to breakdown
28 language barriers by requiring every state agency, and any
29 organization that receives state funding and provides services
30 to the public, to "take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful
31 access to services, programs, and activities by limited English
32 proficient persons," free of charge and regardless of what
33 language is spoken; and
34
35    WHEREAS, as a result of Hawaii's language access law, the
36 Office of Language Access was established to promote equal

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1 access and full participation for persons with limited English
2 proficiency through oversight, coordination, and technical
3 assistance to state and state-funded entities and by reviewing
4 and monitoring language access plans; and
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6     WHEREAS, the Office of Language Access has promoted
7 language access through education and training to state agencies
8 and state-funded entities and through outreach to the general
9 public at community events and conferences, and in public
10 service announcements; and
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12     WHEREAS, many residents in Hawaii are still unaware of the
13 language access law and of the everyday challenges faced by
14 limited English proficient persons, such as when a patient who
15 speaks only Chinese comes in for an appointment with a doctor
16 who speaks only English, when a state social worker who speaks
17 English and Ilokano meets with a client applying for food stamps
18 who speaks only Marshallese, or when a public school nurse who
19 speaks English calls home about a child with a fever and speaks
20 to the child's mother who only speaks Korean; and
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22     WHEREAS, ongoing education and efforts are needed to ensure
23 that language access becomes the "norm" in the provision of
24 government services; and
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26     WHEREAS, declaring a month dedicated to the promotion of
27 language access, will allow the Office of Language Access, in
28 conjunction with community organizations, to showcase the
29 language access law, its requirements, and its benefits; now,
30 therefore,
31
32     BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-fourth
33 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2008,
34 that September 2008 is designated as Language Access Month to
35 raise awareness of the language access laws and the provision of
36 equal access to state and state-funded government services; and
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38     BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
39 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor of the State of Hawaii
40 and Hawaii's congressional delegation.
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OFFERED BY:

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# S.R. NO. 40

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