

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1998
A BILL RELATING TO THE NUMBER OF BLIND, DEAF AND DEAF-BLIND
PERSONS IN THE STATE OF THE HAWAII

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House Committee on Human Services & Aging
Rep. Maile S. L. Shimabukuro, Chair

Thursday, January 24, 2008, 8:30 am
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

Representative Shimabukuro and Members of the Committee:

As Chair of the Hui O Na Makamaka (Friends of the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped), we support House Bill 1998 which seeks to appropriate funds for a survey of the number of blind, deaf, and deaf-blind persons in the State of Hawaii.

Our Friends of the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) seeks to promote services of LBPH by doing outreach throughout the community. This bill will help to survey the State and determine how many individuals with visual and hearing disabilities are in the different communities. When friends and family begin to lose their vision or hearing, support in many forms must be made available. These individuals continue to be contributing members of society and do not need to exist in isolation. We can continue to bridge the communication gap, expand the use of technology to bring them information, entertainment, education, internet access, etc.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1998 and for helping us to continue to reach out and meet the needs of a growing segment of our population.

hshtestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov

My testimony in support of HB1998 and SB2050

12 copies please for

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING

Rep. Maile S. L. Shimabukuro, Chair

Rep. Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair

DATE: January 24, 2008

8:30AM

PLACE: Conference Room 329

A) RELATING TO THE NUMBER OF BLIND, DEAF, AND DEAF-BLIND PERSONS IN THE STATE OF HAWAII. HB1998 and SB2050

B) also RELATING TO INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS. (HB 2046).

C) Also relating to INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS. (HB 2047)

NEEDED Statistics do not only help and benefit our certified blind, deaf, deaf-blind and handicapped, but also those who want to get our votes. So far not even the board of Health, Ho'opono nor other Blind, Deaf, Deaf-Blind or other Handicapped Agencies have ANY reliable or reasonable statistics about us.

Kathy Reimers, Hawaii Services on Deafness executive director, quoted 100,000 deaf persons and increasing with the elder population. Ho'opono only quoted 3,340 blind persons who are registered with them as tip of the iceberg. Why is it more important to report every imaginable VENERAL DISEASE, rather than the legally certified blind, deaf and handicapped???

Maybe you could also consider, to substitute our hardly used, but expensive voting machines with an outreach program for absentee ballots for us. Maybe you can combine our Kapuna ID from the City with a FREE Voter Registration State ID to gather the votes for you, since most of us cannot have a State Drivers License. The BIG Savings on the rarely used Voting Machines for Handicapped could more than pay for it.

A FREE High-Speed inter-net access could also be used to reach the homebound for their votes and to communicate with us. That would also double up in Savings on needed Education that would make useful Taxpayers out of us as writers and data entry jobs. Most Deaf can SEE and most blind can HEAR with the loudly reading and enlarging Zoom-Text program! Presently The State pays about \$75.- per hour for each of the required 2 or 3 ASL interpreters. The Federal Government also Subsidizes our Video Relay Services with nearly \$7.- per minute but NO FREE HIGH SPEED INTERNET ACCESS TO USE THEIR "FREE" cameras. Don't you think that FREE High-Speed Inter-net access would be a big money saver and help in our ailing education programs? Especially when your statistics indicate that twice as many or 200% more deaf blind and handicapped get 200% more information from the inter-net than regular users

AGAIN, we need STATISTICS to see how very few Deaf are using ASL and how very few Blind can read and write Braille. Most can train them selves on Computers through FREE High-Speed Inter-net access. Heinz-Guenther Pink