



# HAWAI'I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411 • HONOLULU, HI 96813-5095 • PHONE: (808) 586-8636 • FAX: (808) 586-8655 • TDD: (808) 586-8692

February 1, 2008

Rm. 309, 10:30 a.m.

To: The Honorable Alex Sonson, Chair, and Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment

From: Sara Banks, Acting Chair, and Commissioners of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission

Re: H.B. No. 2446

**LATE TESTIMONY**

The Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) has enforcement jurisdiction over state laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state-funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai'i constitutional mandate that "no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights because of race, religion, sex or ancestry". Art. I, Sec. 5.

The HCRC supports H.B. No. 2446 which makes an appropriation for a statewide language access bank.

The issue of access to state services for persons of limited English proficiency (LEP) is not new for Hawai'i. The issue was first litigated over twenty-five years ago in the Mangrobang case, in which the State Department of Health entered into a stipulated judgment in a Title VI challenge to limited access for LEP persons. In 2006, enacted Act 290, creating HRS chapter 371, part II, and establishing the Office of Language Access (OLA), affirming the state's obligation to provide language access to services for LEP persons under federal and state law.

H.B. No. 2446 makes an appropriation for a centralized language access bank, implicitly recognizing that the several state departments, divisions, and agencies will need resources to meet their obligations and provide effective language access, and that left to their own devices, will have difficulty doing so. The HCRC supports H.B. No. 2446, and suggests that the role of a language access bank with centralized resources should be expanded beyond the development of a roster of qualified and trained interpreters, to include direct assistance with initial contact and referral, assistance with translation of vital documents, and development of expertise in language access as a statewide resource.



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