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TO: Honorable Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Chair  
Honorable Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Human Services and Housing

FROM: Serafin "Jun" Colmenares, Executive Director, Office of Language Access

RE: **Testimony in Support of HB2575, HD1**  
Committee on Human Services and Housing  
Hearing: February 14, 2008, 9:25 a.m., Room 329

The Office of Language Access (OLA) supports the intent of HB2575 HD1, which

- (1) Clarifies definitions related to language access,
- (2) Expands the Language Access Advisory Council from 11 to 15 members in order to include members with an interest in language access from each of the counties;
- (3) Clarifies that ex officio members of the Council are the Executive Director of the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission and the Executive Director of the Office of Language Access;  
and
- (4) Appropriates funds to establish a language access bank as a centralized source.

This measure is not part of the Governor's Administrative Bill Package.

OLA supports this measure which streamlines the language access law by clarifying definitions and by ensuring that the Council has statewide representation so that limited English proficient individuals in communities throughout the State can be heard.

Whether state agencies and covered entities will be able to comply with the legislative mandate to provide persons with limited English proficiency with meaningful access to state-provided or state-funded services, programs, and activities, largely depends on the availability of trained and certified interpreters and translators. The establishment of a statewide language bank as a centralized resource will be a vital component in initially establishing a statewide roster of available interpreters and translators, coordinating training programs for interpreters and translators, matching and referring qualified interpreters and translators, and training state employees who are the first to respond to requests from customers with limited English proficiency. The bank would work towards ensuring quality of language services through the

eventual standardization of testing and certification of interpreters and translators who provide language services to state agencies and covered entities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

# CONGRESS OF VISAYAN ORGANIZATIONS

99-1325 Aiea Heights Drive, Aiea, HI 96701

Founded 1985

TO: Rep. Maile Shimabukuro  
Chair, House Committee on Human Services

DATE OF HEARING: Thursday, February 14, 2008  
9:25 a.m., House Conference Room 329

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of HB2575 HD1

Madame Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the House Committee on Human Services. My name is Margarita L. Hopkins, president of the Congress of Visayan Organizations, the statewide umbrella of Visayan organizations in Hawaii.

I am testifying in strong support of HB2575 HD1 Relating to Language Access, which clarifies certain definitions, expands the Language Access Advisory Council to include representation from all the counties, and appropriates funds for the establishment of a language access bank as a central resource. We believe that this bill, if adopted, will strengthen Hawaii's language access law, ensure that all voices are represented in the advisory council, and provide the Office of Language Access with the necessary tools to ensure that meaningful language access is provided by state agencies and covered entities to Hawaii's limited English proficient population.

The proposed language bank addresses the dearth of qualified interpreters and translators in the State. It will not only establish a statewide registry of available interpreters and translators but will also coordinate the training of interpreters and translators, and match and refer qualified interpreters and translators with the needs of state agencies and covered entities. It will also train state employees in positions of public contact who provide language services to limited English proficient individuals. In the long run, it will look at developing the capacity and resources of the Office of Language Access and work toward standardizing the testing and certification of interpreters and translators to ensure the quality and accuracy of their services.

We therefore urge your committee to approve this bill.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Very truly yours,

MARGARITA HOPKINS  
President

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2006-2008

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Mabuhay Club of Hilo  
Puna Saranay Club  
Sariling Gawa Youth Council, Inc.

# BIG ISLAND

FILIPINO COMMUNITY COUNCIL



Testimony in support of  
HB No. 2575: Relating to Language Access  
Committee on Human Services and Housing  
February 14, 2008 9:25 AM, Rm 329

Aloha. My name is Lito M. Asuncion and I am submitting this testimony urging for your full support of HB No. 2575.

In both my capacities as President of the Big Island Filipino Community Council and as a Program Planner for the Hawaii County Office of Aging, I have witnessed and experienced in many occasions the unbearable difficulties of limited English proficient individuals in accessing services, programs and benefits they are entitled to receive.

In addition to the proposed legislation contained in the bill to strengthen and clarify the language in the recently enacted Hawaii Language Access Act, I am requesting your favorable action to provide funding to the Office of Language Access so that they can explore and develop proven ways of establishing a statewide centralized access point for much needed resources for the population that the state serves and entities covered by the Hawaii Language Access Act. I am confident, such a language access resource collection shall translate the many positive features of the act into practical implementing activities for the community.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Lito M. Asuncion  
President

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