

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



LILLIAN B. KOLLER, ESQ.
DIRECTOR

HENRY OLIVA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

LATE

April 18, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: H.C.R. 150, H.D. 1 – REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE BUREAU TO
STUDY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER FOR DEAF AND HARD OF
HEARING INDIVIDUALS

Hearing: Friday, April 18, 2008, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 229, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to request the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a study on the establishment of a comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals to coordinate and improve their employment options through the Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this resolution. A study on the establishment of a comprehensive state facility to specifically meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing persons statewide through Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division (VRSBD) is the first step toward the improvement of services to this population. Deaf and hard of hearing persons have special communication needs that impact all areas of their lives. Their unique communication needs

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

affect language development, understanding of social situations, budgeting, housing and transportation and more. These areas have a critical impact on education and training related to employment.

The proposed study will initiate the process of provide quality services for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing. Comprehensive services will broaden employment options and the successful employment of Hawaii's citizens who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this concurrent resolution.

April 17, 2008

LATE

Re: HCR 150, HD1

ALOHA!

My name is Bobby Harris and I am hearing impaired. I am a local resident on Oahu and I am writing this testimony to state that I would like to see a deaf one stop center for all of our deaf clients in this community to be able to have a place to socialize and have our own reading room, counseling area support group section, also a snack bar area and other amenities area for our deaf and a training department for the deaf and hard of hearing, who may need jobs,

I am in support for this and also for the deaf who may need help in financial assistance with food stamps, welfare, SSI, SSA, and obtaining hearing aids and also who may be able to apply for any other assistance such as housing needs, and peer counseling on any issues, and I can see that our deaf can succeed with help also from deaf services V.R. with a case file filed with counselors and advocates, also I am asking that you to help us with these needs as it is imperative that our deaf community has our own center a one stop place for all services to be provided to them free of charge, for any of the needs,

I ask that the deaf and hard of hearing and the late deafened, be able to have this kind of access to these services in the best confidentiality as possible for them, please help us with this needs for the serious concern for the entire deaf community its important that they have their needs met and be able to be in comfort for their privacy, and assurance, that we can provide them with and to apply for jobs and have meetings to be held there in conference rooms, and, that it be placed only for the deaf and hard of hearing and those in the leadership and directors who can take care of the deaf much more efficiently, thank you for your support and your help with these matters

SINCERELY YOURS

BOBBY HARRIS

Francine Aona Kenyon

dba KULI IKE KOKUA

2520 Jasmine Street

Honolulu, HI 96816

fmkyn@hawaii.rr.com

LATE

Friday, April 18, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. in Conference Room 229

**TESTIMONY
TO SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING
ON
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 150, HOUSE DRAFT 1,
REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
TO STUDY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
A COMPREHENSIVE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER
FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS**

Aloha, Chair Senator Suzanne Chun-Oakland, Vice-Chair Senator Les Ihara, Jr.,
Members, and Friends:

I am Francine Kenyon, a long-time advocate and volunteer consultant for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind people of the State of Hawaii.

I strongly support House Concurrent Resolution No. 150, House Draft No. 1, requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to study the establishment of a comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, because of 3 important reasons: (1) employment; (2) productive life; and (3) communication access. House Concurrent Resolution No. 150, House Draft No. 1 is similar to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 37, Senate Draft No. 1.

The purpose is to have the comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center as one-stop center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. Similar like Filipino Community Center in Waipahu, Ho'opono for Blind, and Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, the comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center can be an excellent place as a one-stop center with bistro café, coffee shop, bookstore, beauty shop, tutorial center, fully accessible video conference room, small theater, swimming pool, and, even Sprint Relay store. This would give a good opportunity for deaf and hard-of-hearing people to get full job training as cashiers, tellers, beautician, waiter/waitress, audio-visual technicians, lifeguards, and, even, manager or supervisor, or sales associate for Sprint. National Association of the Deaf headquarter in Silver Spring, Maryland is a good example, too, because it has the bookstore, coffee café, conference rooms, and offices where we deaf and hard-of-hearing people could go for information and referrals on deafness-related issues, work in offices, or do business there. This will definitely help

deaf and hard-of-hearing become fully independent and have financial freedom with good self-esteem as first-class citizens in this state.

A few years ago, we did have a feasibility study on the community center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals with City and County of Honolulu Community Services during the administration of Mayor Jeremy Harris. We still have a long struggle of getting this community center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals be initiated and established. We feel it is very important for us to have such a comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

Last May, we had a Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Advisory Board meeting with Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education. Thus, RSA recommended us to have a feasibility study on a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to passing this important resolution, House Concurrent Resolution No. 150, House Draft No. 1 for Legislative Reference Bureau to help us do the study to establish such a center.

Mahalo nui loa for allowing me to testify on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Francine Aona Kenyon
Deaf Advocate & Consultant