



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

April 2, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Michael Y. Magaoay, Chair
House Committee on Legislative Management

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: Wednesday, April 2, 2008, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 423, 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

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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.

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Deleted: need the flexibility to transfer funds among programs throughout the entire fiscal year, and not just the sixty days that the Legislature is in session. ¶
1) It is important to point out that more than 80% of the DHS budget is for non-discretionary, fixed cost, social assistance entitlement programs providing direct services and payments to Hawaii's most vulnerable residents such as Medicaid health insurance for low-income children and adults, foster care for the maintenance of abused and neglected children, and supplemental payments to the elderly and disabled for residential long-term care. ¶

¶
Given past actual expenditures and the types of programs that the DHS provides, there is a very high probability that estimated budgets in individual program IDs will not match actual expenditures. Predicting program expenditures is not an exact science. For example, DHS has no control over the number of children entering the foster care system and is required to provide counseling and financial assistance and support. Similarly, medical and financial assistance clients are generally "categorically" eligible, cannot be refused program entry just because funds are short; in other words, the State is obligated to assist qualified applicants. ¶

¶
It is thus critically necessary for the Department of Human Services to have the benefit of the Governor's authority to transfer funds in order to respond to changing needs so that we can ensure the provision of timely and effective necessary services to our very needy client population. It is not in the State's best interest to remove the Governor's authority to authorize appropriation transfers between programs. ¶

¶
2) This amendment will adversely impact DHS' ability to implement promising new and expanded programs and services that this Administration has initiated over the past four years to help needy individuals, children and families. For example, in April 2006, the Department transferred surplus funds from HMS 202 to HMS 224 – Homeless Services to fund a shelter in Kakaako for homeless persons. The transfer allowed the State to address this urgent need immediately. In June 2006, funds were transferred from HMS 203, 204, and 503 to HMS 224 to provide immediate necessary homeless services on t[... [15]



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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April 2, 2008

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT

House Concurrent Resolution 150, HD1 – Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to Study the Feasibility of Establishing a Comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Concurrent Resolution 150, HD1 which requests the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing in Hawaii.

The mission of the State Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division is to place people with disabilities into substantial gainful employment in the community. Employment often reflects how an individual feels about being productive, contributing back to society, and pursuing personal goals in life. In order to become successfully employed, an individual needs basic communication skills. People who are deaf or hard of hearing often do not have communication skills comparable to the average hearing population.

Establishing a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for people who are deaf and hard of hearing takes into regard the communication barriers faced by deaf and hard of hearing people on a daily basis, and attempts to remove it by hiring staff fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) and who understand Deaf culture. Such a center would be comparable to the current Ho'opono services for individuals who are blind or who have low vision. Staff with ASL communication skills would make vocational evaluation, independent living skills training, and vocational training more effective for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Developing a center will represent a significant change in the way that services are delivered and will likely require a re-organization and shift in staff. Therefore, a feasibility study of establishing a center, along with defining an appropriate model is important.

We urge your favorable consideration of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

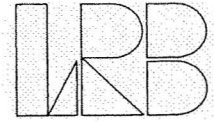
Respectfully submitted,

PATRICIA M. NIELSEN
Chairperson
Legislative Committee

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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
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Written Testimony Only

HCR150, HD1

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO STUDY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS.

Testimony by the Legislative Reference Bureau
Ken H. Takayama, Acting Director

Presented to the House Committee on Legislative Management

Wednesday, April 2, 2008, 2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 423

Chair Magaoay and Members of the Committee:

I am Ken Takayama, Acting Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on H.C.R No. 150, H.D. 1, which requests the Bureau to study the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

The Bureau does not take any position for or against this measure, but offers the following comments:

- If the Legislature wants us to do this study, we will do it to the best of our ability;
- In its present form, the Resolution requests a study that appears to be both straightforward and manageable in scope. It is also essentially identical to S.C.R. No. 37, S.D. 1, on the same subject.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

APRIL 2, 2008

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT

House Concurrent Resolution 150 – Requesting the Legislative Bureau to Study the Feasibility of
Establishing a Comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center for the Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Individuals

The Deaf Hard of Hearing Advisory Board of the State Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division strongly supports the House Concurrent Resolution 150 which requests the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.

The mission of Vocational Rehabilitation Services is to place people with disabilities into substantial gainful employment in the community. The deaf and hard of hearing people however, have a real problem because of the lack of basic communications with the hearing population. Consequently they cannot access the services of other resources in the community directly because of communications issues. Furthermore, they desperately need more comprehensive services to learn daily living skills, improve English language competency, explore vocational options; understand what is expected of employees and how to plan for employment. The comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center would give them a much better opportunity through guidance classes to find and maintain gainful employment. I have said this many times in this capitol in the past 25-26 years, "helping our deaf and hard of hearing young people today will pay dividends in the future when they become productive tax paying citizens instead of being of depending on the government.

At this point, deaf and hard of hearing people are underserved. The feasibility study of a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center will be the first step toward better services. Once we have the need documented, we can make recommendations for the expansion of services. I don't want to base the justification on comparison with the blind, but they are offered so much more compared to the deaf. At Ho'opono they have 42 positions serving the blind, while at VR we have 5 positions servicing the deaf and hard of hearing. That never did make a lot of sense to me but I always understood why. As I've said many times before you can see the blind person, but you cannot see the deaf person so it's easier for legislators to understand the problems and needs of the blind, but difficult to understand the problems and needs of the deaf. That's my personal opinion.

I ask for this committee's support of HCR 150.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

ART FRANK
Chairperson
Deaf Hard of Hearing Advisory Board