

Francine Aona Kenyon

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Wednesday, April 2, 2008 in Conference Room 423

**TESTIMONY
TO HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT
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 Representative Michael Magaoay, Vice-Chair Representative James Tokioka, 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 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, because of 3 important reasons: (1) employment; (2) productive life; and (3) communication access. HCR 150, HD 1 is similar to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 37, Senate Draft 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, we can have the one-stop center with bistro café, coffee shop, bookstore, beauty shop, tutorial center, fully accessible video conference room, small theater, swimming pool, and many places where deaf and hard-of-hearing people can get full job training as cashiers, tellers, beautician, waiter/waitress, audio-visual technicians, lifeguards, and, even, manager or supervisor. This will definitely help deaf and hard-of-hearing become fully independent, financially stable, and first-class citizens in this state.

Also, the comprehensive center would be an excellent place where deaf and hard-of-hearing people can come to workshops for deaf and learn more or gather for social times and arts and crafts for craft fair as they used to at Hawaii Services on Deafness located at Moililii Community Center.

Hawaii Services on Deafness (HSOD) began its interpreter referral and personal adjustment services for the deaf and hard of hearing consumers in 1980 and was funded by the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Aloha United Way. HSOD had tirelessly been instrumental in providing full independence among deaf and hard-of-hearing people. In 2002, HSOD gave up the personal adjustment services to Goodwill Industries, Inc. Four years later, the VR contract was transferred from Goodwill Industries, Inc. to Hawai'i Center on Independent Living (HCIL). However, the services and programs are not enough to meet our needs satisfactorily unless the comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for deaf and hard-of-hearing be established.

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 but we still struggle for a long time in trying to get this community center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals be initiated and established. This important project cannot be delayed any longer before the young deaf and hard-of-hearing children would soon become adults.

In conclusion, we feel that the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 150, House Draft 1 will definitely initiate the establishment of the innovative, comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

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

Sincerely,

Francine Aona Kenyon
Deaf Advocate & Consultant