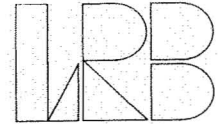


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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
State of Hawaii
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Written Testimony Only

HCR150

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING 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 Human Services & Housing

Thursday, March 20, 2008, 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

Chair Shimabukuro 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, 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 and concerns:

- If the Legislature wants us to do this study, we will do it to the best of our ability;
- We believe that our capabilities will be best utilized by attempting to pull relevant and useful information together for the Legislature's consideration, such as the views and concerns of local organizations and facilities provided in other jurisdictions;
- Any information we could provide regarding some of the more technical aspects of the resolution such as the cost of establishing such a facility is at best likely to be speculative;
- We therefore request the Committee's consideration in making the following amendments to some of the "Resolved" clauses to help make the study more manageable and enable us to complete the study in a timely manner as follows:
 - (1) To provide the Bureau flexibility in approaching the subject, request the Bureau to report on the "establishment" rather than the "feasibility" of

establishing the center (first clause) or "determining the feasibility" of the center (paragraph (3));

- (2) To provide the Legislature with more flexibility in responding to the report, use the term "suggest" rather than "define" in paragraph (2) with regard to prospective services to be provided in the center;
- (3) To identify the potential population of deaf and hard of hearing individuals most efficiently, request the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division of the Department of Human Services, which has the experience, contacts, and expertise, to do this rather than the Bureau; and
- (4) The Bureau can only attempt to make very rough estimates with regard to the cost of real estate, leasing of land or facilities, cost of professional services to plan, design, and construct facilities, operating costs, employee compensation and benefits, and insurance, transportation, and other costs. A more productive task would be for the Bureau to survey other states that have such centers to request global approximations of their start-up and annual operating costs.

We have attached draft language to implement the requested modifications.

Implementation of the requested amendments will make this concurrent resolution identical to S.C.R. No. 37, S.D. 1, on the same subject.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

HCR150, HD1
(PROPOSED LANGUAGE)

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2008, the Senate concurring, that the Legislative Reference Bureau is requested to report to the Legislature on ~~[the feasibility of]~~ establishing a comprehensive center serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals to coordinate and improve their employment options through the Hawaii Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind Division of the Department of Human Services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Reference Bureau ~~[is study shall]~~ is requested to include research on model centers in other states for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing to address the type of services provided to the target population, and make findings and recommendations to:

- (1) ~~[Define]~~ Suggest services to be delivered by a comprehensive state facility providing vocational rehabilitation services for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing;
- (2) ~~[Identify the potential population of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Hawaii who may benefit from the provision of such services;~~
- ~~-(3)-~~ ~~[Determine the feasibility]~~ Roughly estimate the costs of establishing such a center in Hawaii [, including estimated costs] and survey similar start-up and operating costs of centers in other states; and
- ~~[-(4)-]~~ (3) Consult with agencies familiar with serving the target population, including the Hawaii Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division of the Department of Human Services, the Vocational Rehabilitation Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board, the Disability and Communication Access Board, the Hawaii Center for the Deaf and Blind, the Kapiolani Deaf Center, the Aloha State Association of the Deaf, the Hearing Loss Association of America, Ohana Kokua Ano Kuli, Goodwill Industries of Hawaii, and Hawaii Centers for Independent Living; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division of the Department of Human

Services Department is requested to assist the Legislative Reference Bureau in this study by identifying the potential population of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Hawaii who may benefit from the provision of such services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Reference Bureau [~~shall~~] is requested to submit its findings and recommendations to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2009; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau, the Director of the Hawaii Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division of the Department of Human Services, the Chair of the Vocational Rehabilitation Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board, the Executive Director of the Disability and Communication Access Board, the Administrator of the Hawaii Center for the Deaf and Blind, the Director of the Kapiolani Deaf Center, the President of the Aloha State Association of the Deaf, the Executive Director of the Hearing Loss Association of America, the Director of Ohana Kokua Ano Kuli, the President of Goodwill Industries of Hawaii, and the Executive Director of Hawaii Centers for Independent Living.

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

March 20, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Housing

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: H.C.R. 150 – Requesting the Legislative Bureau to Study the Feasibility of
Establishing a Comprehensive Vocational Center for Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Individuals.

Hearing: Thursday, March 20, 2008, 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is for the Legislative Reference Bureau to study the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive center to provide services to deaf and hard of hearing persons to coordinate and improve their employment options through the Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division .

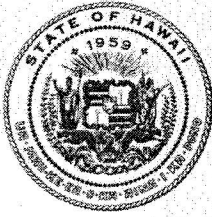
DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this resolution. The Department recognizes the need for a feasibility study for a comprehensive facility to specifically meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing persons statewide to coordinate and improve their employment options through the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division (VRSBD). The feasibility study 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 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 feasibility study will initiate the process to 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 H.C.R. 150.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this bill.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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March 20, 2008

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOUSING

House Concurrent Resolution 150 – 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 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

FRANCINE WAI
Executive Director

MARCH 20, 2008

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOUSING

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