



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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January 31, 2008

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING

Senate Bill 2053 - Relating to Services for the Disabled

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) opposes of Senate Bill 2053 relating to services for the disabled that makes an appropriation and establishes an Internet Access for the Disabled Program to offer free Internet access to individuals who are disabled as a responsibility within the Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB).

While we recognize that this bill arose from the work of the Deaf-Blind Task Force, this bill does not represent the entire Task Force and the Task Force did not endorse this bill. Providing free Internet access to approximately one in five individuals with disabilities (20% of the population) would impact an estimated 250,000 people. Individuals with disabilities cover a wide financial spectrum of employed, underemployed, and unemployed people similar to the general population. It is unclear whether the intent of this bill is to pay the monthly charge in individuals' homes or to set up physical locations where individuals can go to obtain free access to the Internet. As such, we have no idea of the cost implications.

We urge you to hold this bill in committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia M. Nielsen

PATRICIA M. NIELSEN
Chairperson
Legislative Committee

Francine Wai

FRANCINE WAI
Executive Director

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2053
A BILL RELATING TO SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Deanna Espinas, Chair of Hui O Na Makamaka
Friends of the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
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Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

Thursday, January 31, 2008, 1:30 pm
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

Senator Chun Oakland and Members of the Committee:

As Chair of the Hui O Na Makamaka (Friends of the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped), we support Senate Bill 2053 which establishes Internet access for the disabled program to offer free Internet access to individuals who are disabled; makes an appropriation.

Our Friends of the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) seeks to promote services of LBPH by doing outreach throughout the community. This bill will help to provide computer and communication opportunities to those individuals with visual and other disabilities. When members of our society lose their vision, hearing, or become disabled, it becomes even more critical that support systems and other services be readily available. While some of the disabled are able to live as independent citizens in their neighborhoods, there are also many who are hesitant or unable to advocate their needs. Many are forced to depend on their families to help them maneuver their way through the system just to get basic services. It must indeed be frustrating and they do not deserve to exist in isolation in our society. This legislative bill allows us be that voice so that society can bridge the communication gap, expand the use of technology to bring them information, entertainment, education, internet access, etc.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2053 and for helping us to continue to reach out and meet the particular needs of this growing segment of our population.