

Francine Aona Kenyon
dba KULI IKE KOKUA

Friday, April 4, 2008 in Conference Room 211 at 10:05 a.m.

**TESTIMONY TO SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
ON
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION # 200, SENATE DRAFT # 1,
REQUESTING THE AUDITOR TO CONDUCT A FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT AUDIT
OF THE HAWAII CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

ALOHA, Chair Senator Roz Baker, Vice-Chair Shan Tsutsui, Members, and Friends,

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

I strongly support with intent of Senate Concurrent Resolution 200, Senate Draft 1, requesting the auditor to conduct a financial and management audit of the Hawaii Centers for Independent Living because of three important reasons: (1) full independence; (2) provision of better quality of services and programs; and (3) well-managed, qualified programmatic staff.

Kuli Ike KOKUA is a private volunteer-based, woman-owned business that include consulting, teaching, fostering and promoting full independence, providing technical assistance, and so forth. The goal of Kuli Ike KOKUA is to help deaf people achieve their dreams that will lead them to successful careers and to ensure themselves of their civil rights as mandated by Americans with Disabilities Act, Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and other federal and state laws.

I am here only to testify as an individual and advocate on behalf of deaf and disabled communities.

I received many anguish, emotional calls from deaf consumers and consumers with disabilities in Hawaii. With my tears in my eyes, I encouraged them to file their complaints with the Vocational Rehabilitation Division because they contract the Hawaii Center on Independent Living; therefore, HCIL is expected to satisfy the Vocational Rehabilitation scope of services in their contract agreement.

Consumers with disabilities, including those who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, have the right to receive appropriate services and programs so, therefore, the Hawaii Center on Independent Living is expected to meet their needs, not to turn them away, to close their cases, and to refer them to other agencies or churches that do not have specific programs to meet their needs as individuals with disabilities.

It was very sad to see how individuals who are deaf and hard-of-hearing and individuals with disabilities have struggled for so long in their encounters with Hilo CIL and with HCIL here in Honolulu. I heartily and strongly feel that they really desperately need your support in ensuring that they receive the full satisfaction of services and programs, maximizing their full independence in our society as the first-class citizens. On behalf of deaf and disabled communities, we are concerned about the HCIL's possible violation of their civil rights and

labor laws as mandated by Americans with Disabilities Act, the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Dept. of Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation Act, Title VII.

SCR 37, SD 1 mentions about the Center closing the cases of clients who had offered testimony in Support of Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 81 last year. I would like to add that there was much pressure on those who did not participate or who wanted to support the resolution but they were afraid of retaliation and of having their cases closed.

It is important that the financial and management of Hawaii Centers for Independent Living be fairly handled to ensure that the full services and programs for individuals with disabilities are met and that the Board of Directors be strengthened in order to guarantee better quality of services and programs for individuals with disabilities, including individuals who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.

I believe that the passage of this resolution is very important to our entire general community to assure the full satisfaction among the consumers with disabilities, including the consumers who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, as well as among the employees at the workplace.

Mahalo nui loa for your great support of this resolution on the behalf of our community serving people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Francine Aona Kenyon