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STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
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February 26, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: S.C.R. 37 – REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE BUREAU TO CONDUCT  
A FEASIBILITY STUDY TO ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE  
VOCATIONAL CENTER FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD  
OF HEARING

Hearing: Tuesday, February 26, 2008, 1:15 p.m.  
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to investigate the feasibility of establishing a center to provide comprehensive services to deaf and hard of hearing persons in Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division .

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) strongly supports the intent of this resolution. The Department recognizes the need for a feasibility study for 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). 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 of providing 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.



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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February 26, 2008

### TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING

Senate Concurrent Resolution 37 – 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 Senate Concurrent Resolution 37 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

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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU  
State of Hawaii  
State Capitol  
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Written Testimony Only

## SCR37

# 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 Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

Tuesday, February 26, 2008, 1:15 p.m.  
Conference Room 016

Chair Chun Oakland and Members of the Committee:

I am Ken Takayama, Acting Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on S.C.R. No. 37, 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.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

**SCR37, SD1  
(PROPOSED LANGUAGE)**

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2008, the House of Representatives 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.



# LATE

February 26, 2006

## TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING

### Senate Concurrent Resolution 37 – 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 supports Senate Concurrent Resolution 37 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 on welfare, SSI, etc.

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 in this building many times, "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 realize my friends at the Hawaii Center on Independent Living (HCIL) are against this resolution because they don't see the need for it. I disagree because Independent Living is not the only service our community needs as I've pointed out.

I ask for this committee's support of SCR 37.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

ART FRANK  
Chairperson  
Deaf Hard of Hearing Advisory Board



Aloha, my name is Kristine Pagano. I am an active community member with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

I strongly support the SCR 37, "Requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to study the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals" because our state is in need of a center for the deaf and hard of hearing. The establishment of a comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing will educate and promote independence through employment opportunities.

The Hawaii Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind on Oahu has a Deaf Services Section, however, the services are limited. There is a need to expand services to include education for the understanding and prevention of deafness, vocational rehabilitation services leading to job placement, and training to empower consumers toward independence and success in their vocations and their lives. Instructional services are needed such as advocacy, employment and disability laws, information on accommodations, computer and other communication skills development, translation support services (English to ASL), life skills, personal and home management, classes to build self confidence, understanding and adjustment to employment through rehabilitation counseling.

Please support the SCR 37 LRB Study on State Deaf and Hard of Hearing Facility. The study is necessary to report the findings and recommendations for the expansion of specialized services for consumers who are deaf and hard of hearing through establishing a comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

*Kristine Pagano*

Kristine Pagano  
Honolulu Hawaii

**LATE**