

DATE:

TO: Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Shan S. Tsutsui, Vice Chair
Ways and Means Committee

FROM: The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board to Vocational
Rehabilitation

SUBJECT: 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

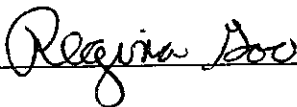
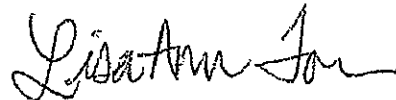
The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board (DHHAB) to Vocational Rehabilitation strongly supports SCR 37. There is a serious need for additional services to deaf and hard of hearing persons to equip them to be productive members of the community. Because American Sign Language is the first language of persons who are deaf, they are limited in their access to resources. There are gaps in education that affect literacy and basic skills for everyday life. A comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center would provide education on budgeting, English, careers, housing, parenting and negotiating the world of work. This would improve the success rate of deaf and hard of hearing persons and assist them with advancement on the job.

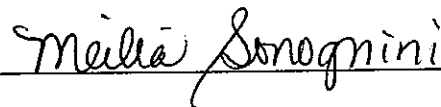
The feasibility study is needed first to identify the areas of need and funding possibilities for a comprehensive center.

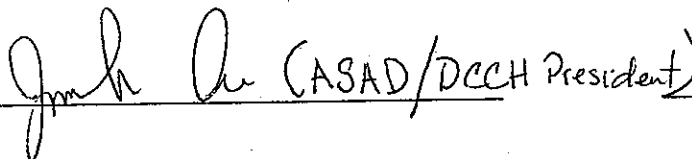
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

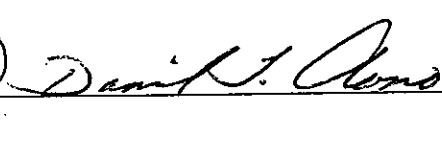


Art Frank
Chair





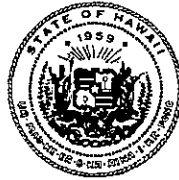






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P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

April 2, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: S.C.R. 37, S.D. 1 – REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE BUREAU TO
STUDY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER FOR DEAF AND HARD OF
HEARING INDIVIDUALS

Hearing: Friday, April 4, 2008, 10:05 a.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to request the Legislative Reference Bureau to conduct a study on the establishment of a comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals 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. A study on the establishment of 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) 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 proposed study will initiate the process of 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 this concurrent resolution.

Ken H. Takayama
Acting Director

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

Written Comments Only

SCR37, SD1

**REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU TO STUDY THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
CENTER FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS**

Comments by the Legislative Reference Bureau
Ken H. Takayama, Acting Director

Presented to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

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

Chair Baker and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on S.C.R. No. 37, S.D. 1. The Bureau does not take any position for or against this measure, but offers the following comments.

The resolution directs the Bureau to study the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

In its present form, the study requested appears to be both straightforward and manageable in scope. It is also essentially identical to H.C.R. No. 150, H.D. 1, on the same subject.

We will endeavor to work with the Legislature to produce a study that is informative and useful.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our comments.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V/TDD) • Fax (808) 586-8129

April 4, 2008

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senate Concurrent Resolution 37, SD1 – 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, SD1 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 have no objections to amendments proposed in SD1.

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