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Friday, April 4, 2008 at 10:05 A.M.

**TESTIMONY TO SENATE WAYS AND MEANS  
ON  
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION #37, SENATE DRAFT # 1,  
REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU  
TO STUDY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
A COMPREHENSIVE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER  
FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS**

Aloha, Chair Senator Rosalyn Baker, Vice-Chair Shan Tsutsui, Members, and Friends:

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

I strongly support Senate Concurrent Resolution 37, Senate Draft 1, requesting the Legislative Reference Bureau to study the establishment of a comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, because of 3 important reasons: (1) employment; (2) productive life; and (3) communication access.

The purpose is to have the comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center as one-stop center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. Similar like Filipino Community Center in Waipahu, Ho'opono for Blind, and Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, the comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center would be an excellent place as a one-stop center with bistro café, coffee shop, bookstore, beauty shop, tutorial center, fully accessible video conference room, small theater, swimming pool, and many places where deaf and hard-of-hearing people can get full job training as cashiers, tellers, beautician, waiter/waitress, audio-visual technicians, lifeguards, and, even, manager or supervisor. This will definitely help deaf and hard-of-hearing become fully independent, financially stable, and first-class citizens in this state.

Also, the comprehensive center would be an excellent place where deaf and hard-of-hearing people can come to workshops for deaf and learn more or gather for social times and arts and crafts for craft fair as they used to at Hawaii Services on Deafness located at Moililii Community Center.

Hawaii Services on Deafness (HSOD) began its interpreter referral and personal adjustment services for the deaf and hard of hearing consumers in 1980 and was funded by the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Aloha United Way. HSOD had

tirelessly been instrumental in providing full independence among deaf and hard-of-hearing people. In 2002, HSOD gave up the personal adjustment services to Goodwill Industries, Inc. Four years later, the VR contract was transferred from Goodwill Industries, Inc. to Hawai'i Center on Independent Living (HCIL). However, the services and programs are not enough to meet our needs satisfactorily unless the comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for deaf and hard-of-hearing be established.

A few years ago, we did have a feasibility study on the community center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals with City and County of Honolulu Community Services but we still struggle for a long time in trying to get this community center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals be initiated and established. This important project cannot be delayed any longer before the young deaf and hard-of-hearing children would soon become adults.

In conclusion, we feel that the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 150, Senate Draft 1 will definitely initiate the establishment of the innovative, comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

Mahalo nui loa for allowing me to testify on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Francine Aona Kenyon  
Deaf Advocate & Consultant