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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS

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TO: Honorable Alex M. Sonson, Chair
Honorable Bob Nakasone, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Labor and Public Employment

FROM: Serafin "Jun" Colmenares, Executive Director, Office of Language Access

RE: **Testimony in Support of SCR67 SD1**
Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Hearing: April 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m., Room 312

The Office of Language Access (OLA) **supports SCR67 SD1** and respectfully recommends it **pass unamended**.

This measure establishes September as Language Access Month and requests the office to conduct a feasibility study on establishing a statewide language access resource center.

OLA was created by the Legislature in 2006 to ensure that state agencies and state funded organizations provide meaningful access to state funded services, programs and activities. As the language access law is relatively new, the larger community - including those with limited English proficiency (LEP) – may not be aware of the law.

Since being fully staffed in August 2007, the OLA has sought to promote language access through community workshops on the law as well as educational and public service efforts. The dedication of a month long effort to promote language access will help bolster education and awareness of this new law while supporting the OLA's vision of "Language access for all."

In addition, OLA has met the language access coordinators and learned that there is a dearth of competent interpreters and translators in the state. The establishment of a Language Access Resources Center as a centralized resource would serve as a vital component in establishing a statewide roster of available interpreters and translators, coordinating training programs for them, matching and referring qualified interpreters and translators, training state employees who are the first to respond to requests from LEP customers and the feasibility of working towards ensuring quality of language services through standardization of testing and certification of interpreters and translators who provide language services to state agencies and covered entities. A feasibility study to establish such a center will be valuable and timely.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



CONGRESS OF VISAYAN ORGANIZATIONS

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SCR 67 SD1
Report Title: Language Access Month; Language Access Study

Thursday, April 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m.
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 312

To: Hon. House Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Hon. Rep. Alex M. Sonson, Chair
Hon. Rep. Bob Nakasone, Vice Chair
Hon. Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment

From: Margarita Hopkins, President
Congress of Visayan Organizations

My name is Margarita Hopkins, President of the Congress of Visayan Organizations, a statewide umbrella organization representing 22 unit organizations of Visayan ancestry.

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the House Finance Committee, I testify in strong support of this resolution. Language Access Month would greatly benefit the neighbor islands, where access to services presents unique challenges for rural communities. We welcome a feasibility study for the development of a language access resource center, in order to build to have relevant planning information with input from key stakeholders, including the communities where English is not their first language.

On the island of Hawai'i, we are especially interested in language access for civil defense and emergency preparedness. In addition, we see many opportunities for economic development with a work force and a business climate with multi-lingual and multi-cultural assets. Building Hawai'i's capacity for language access is an important investment.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We respectfully request your help to enact this resolution.

Sincerely,

Margarita Hopkins
President
Congress of Visayan Organizations



Tessie Oculito, RN, President
Philippine Nurses Association-Hawaii
92-1269 Umana St. | Kapolei, HI 96707
E-Mail: toculto@hawaii.rr.com | Phone: (808) 457-1066

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SCR 67 SD1

Thursday, April 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m.
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 312

To: Hon. House Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Hon. Rep. Alex M. Sonson, Chair
Hon. Rep. Bob Nakasone, Vice Chair
Hon. Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment

From: Tessie Oculito, President, Philippine Nurses Association-Hawaii

URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO DECLARE SEPTEMBER AS LANGUAGE ACCESS MONTH AND REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS TO CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON ESTABLISHING A STATEWIDE CENTRALIZED LANGUAGE ACCESS RESOURCE CENTER.

My name is Tessie Oculito. I am the president of the Philippine Nurses Association-Hawaii (PNAH). We are in strong support of this resolution. As a national affiliate of the Philippine Nurses Association of America, our shared mission is to uphold and foster the positive image and welfare of our constituent members; to promote professional excellence and contribute to significant outcomes to healthcare and society. Our vision is to be an organization responsive to its constituent needs, and to be a force in the world arena of nursing.

Most of our members are first generation Filipinos, who immigrated to the United States in response to fill America's nursing shortage. We have seen the harmful effects of the extinction of heritage languages in our own families, as well as among Hawai'i's multi-ethnic groups, within one generation. We also have seen the advantages of those who perpetuated their language(s) personally and professionally.

The U.S. labor force and American society are at a socio-economic disadvantage because of insufficient cultural and linguistic competencies for critical transactions ranging from inter-generation family discord, to accessing government services and health care, to brokering and closing socially responsible and mutually prosperous business deals.

We support this resolution because public awareness has cross-cutting benefits for all of America's diverse families and individuals. The capacity for language access provides a strategic vantage point for an enlightened society to champion international relations challenges for global families and neighbors, as well as for a vibrant economy. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please support this resolution.

Sincerely,

Tessie Oculito, RN, President, Philippine Nurses Association-Hawai'i

Filipino American Citizens League

Jake Manegdeg, President
P. O. Box 270126 * Honolulu, Hawai'i 96827

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SCR 67 SD1 Report Title: Language Access Month; Language Access Study

Thursday, April 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m.
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 312

To: Hon. House Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Hon. Rep. Alex M. Sonson, Chair
Hon. Rep. Bob Nakasone, Vice Chair
Hon. Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment

From: Jake Maegdeg, President, Filipino American Citizens League

My name is Jake Manegdeg. As president of the Filipino American Citizens League, I am proud to submit our full support of this resolution. The Filipino American Citizens League was formed over ten years ago to contribute to the advancement of civil rights and social justice for minority groups, underserved populations, and vulnerable communities through education, advocacy, and social action.

I served as Chair of the 75th Anniversary Commission of Filipinos in Hawai'i, as well as a commissioner on the Filipino Centennial Celebration Commission. The achievements and contributions of Filipinos in Hawai'i since 1906 have been well documented. But the untold stories of alarming disparities are emerging in public health issues of domestic violence, incarceration, cancer, diabetes, cardio vascular diseases, unemployment, workers rights, and more.

Language Access Month is important because the public must be educated on the civil rights issues underlying the passage of the Language Access law, or Act 290. Provisions of this resolution can foster the spirit of inquiry, self awareness, critical thinking, sense of belonging, empathy, compassion, unity and reciprocity for the greater good. Thank you for the opportunity to support this resolution. Your help in its passage will bring about the type of profound change that is needed to carry out Hawai'i's language access law. Hawai'i cannot afford not to.

Very Sincerely,

Jake Manegdeg,
President
Filipino American Citizens League



TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SCR 67 SD1

Thursday, April 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m.

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 312

Report Title: Language Access Month; Language Access Study

To: House Committee on Labor and Public Employment

Hon. Rep. Alex M. Sonson, Chair

Hon. Rep. Bob Nakasone, Vice Chair

Hon. Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment

From: Charlene Cuaresma, MPH, President, Filipino Coalition For Solidarity

My name is Charlene Cuaresma. As president of the Filipino Coalition for Solidarity, I am submitting testimony in strong support of this resolution. Since its inception in 1990, the Coalition has represented more than 50 Filipino community leaders whose aim is to work for social justice issues to empower Filipinos to make socially responsible contributions to Hawai'i and our global neighbors through education, advocacy, and social action.

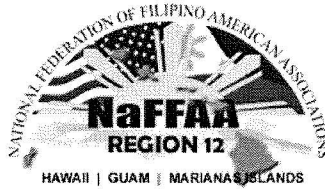
Since President Lyndon Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the telegram message he sent to Martin Luther King immediately after its signing still rings as true today as it did nearly 44 years ago: "Much can be done, and must be done, if the potential freedoms affirmed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are to be translated into practice and meaningful progress." Passage of this resolution to proclaim September as Language Access Month will bring visibility and accountability to the public private partnerships necessary to reach measurable benchmarks. Also, conducting a feasibility study on a language resource center is a strategic and constructive step to foster cooperation and goodwill in building the capacity for government agencies and the community to address systems changes for language access.

Hawai'i Filipinos comprise the largest immigrant group (61%) compared to all the other immigrant groups combined, including Pacific Islanders. Language access to government services will significantly benefit these newcomers in their initial adjustment to Hawai'i. Protecting their civil rights from undue discrimination is important, since immigrants are more likely to contribute to the state economy more than they receive in services.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our support from the community. Your consideration for its passage is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

Charlene Cuaresma, President, Filipino Coalition for Solidarity



TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SCR 67 SD1

Thursday, April 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m.

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 312

Report Title: Language Access Month; Language Access Study

To: House Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Hon. Rep. Alex M. Sonson, Chair
Hon. Rep. Bob Nakasone, Vice Chair
Hon. Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment

From: Amy Agbayani, Ph.D., Vice President
National Federation of Filipino American Associations Region XII

My name is Amy Agbayani. National Federation of Filipino American Associations Region XII (NaFFAA) is in strong support of this resolution. I serve on the Board of NaFFAA Region XII, which represents the interests of Filipinos in Hawai'i, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands. NaFFAA Region XII is an affiliate of the National NaFFAA. Washington policy-makers, private industry and national advocacy groups recognize NaFFAA as the Voice of Filipinos and Filipino Americans throughout the United States. We are a non-partisan, non-profit national affiliation of more than five hundred Filipino-American institutions and umbrella organizations that span twelve regions throughout the continental United States and U.S. Pacific territories.

Having also served as the Chairperson for the first Hawaii Civil Rights Commission, I am aware of the need for Language Access Month to shed light on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which requires all entities receiving federal funds to provide language accessible services to limited English proficient persons. Horror stories abound that expose government entities and their contractors to liability for litigation related to the lack of language access. It is more empowering to build the capacity for language access, than to be embroiled in lawsuits. Approving this resolution for Language Access Month and a feasibility study for a language resource center would be a positive step forward in strengthening partnerships for ongoing implementation of Act 290.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony to support this bill. Please vote yes to its passage.

Sincerely,

Amy Agbayani, Ph.D., Vice President, NaFFAA Region XII



OAHU FILIPINO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

P.O. Box 17531 • Honolulu • Hawaii 96817

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SCR 67 SD1

Thursday, April 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m.

Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 312

Report Title: Language Access Month; Language Access Study

To: House Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Hon. Rep. Alex M. Sonson, Chair
Hon. Rep. Bob Nakasone, Vice Chair
Hon. Members of the House Committee on
Labor and Public Employment

From: Franklin Borrromeo, President
Oahu Filipino Community Council

My name is Franklin Borrromeo. I am very proud to provide strong support of this resolution. I serve as President of the Oahu Filipino Community Council (OFCC). Our Council is an umbrella organization comprised of sixty-two members (62) that represent a network of non-profit civic groups with a unified vision to improve the lives of our Filipino communities.

Raising awareness through a Language Access Month, conducting a feasibility study for a language resource center and gaining public support are important because the following groups of Hawai'i residents who reported they speak English less than very well are at risk for being disenfranchised from government services and emergency preparedness information: White (Non-Hispanic) 1%, Black or African American 3%, American Indian and Alaska Native 5%, Hispanic or Latino 7%, Asian Indian 15%, Cambodian 36%, Chinese (except Taiwanese) 13%, Taiwanese 59%, Filipino 23%, Indonesian 26%, Japanese 10%, Korean 31%, Laotian 53%, Malaysian 24%, Thai 35%, Vietnamese 61%, Native Hawaiian 3%, Samoan 17%, Tongan 31%, Guamanian or Chamorro 4%, and Fijian 13%. Families, schools, work sites, and government agencies including emergency preparedness stand to benefit or become vulnerable to liabilities such as during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. Your consideration to enact this proposed legislation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Franklin Borrromeo, President
Oahu Filipino Community Council

Unit Organizations

Magsingal Association of Hawaii
Narvacan/San Antonio Club of Hawaii
Nueva Vizcaya Association of Hawaii
Pasuquinos Association of Hawaii
Philippine Cultural Foundation
Philippine Nurses Association of Hawaii
Pidig Association of Hawaii
Sanchez Mira Association of Hawaii
San Manuel Pangasinan Association of Hawaii
San Nicolaneos USA
San Nicolas Goodwill Foundation
San Nicolas Teachers of Hawaii
Santa Lucia Association of Hawaii
Sarrat Association of Hawaii
Sarrat International Inc.
Sinait Nt. High School Alumni of Hawaii
Solsona of Hawaii
Tarlac Mutual Club of Hawaii
TPCP
Kalihl Ballroom, Inc.
Sadiri ti San Nicolas iti Hawaii
Samar Leyte Association of Hawaii
Sampaguita/Sunflower Club of Hawaii
San Juan Association of Hawaii
San Nicolas Nat. High School Alumni
Santa Marians of Hawaii
Tagalog Association of Oahu
United Bacarreneos of Hawaii
United Group of Home Operators
United Pangasinan of Hawaii
United Urdaneta Club of Hawaii
United Vintarinians of Hawaii
Vigan Association of Hawaii

Unit Organizations

Alliance of Residential Carehome Administrators
Aloha Saguibsib Cultural Foundation, Inc.
Annac ti Bado iti Hawaii
Annac ti Batac
Annac ti Caoayan 2002
Annak ti Kailokuan iti America
Annak ti Sinait iti Hawaii
Asingan Organization of Hawaii
Badoc-Pinili Aid Association of Hawaii
Banna Association of Hawaii
Bannatiran Association of Hawaii
Batangas Association of Hawaii
Bulacan Circle of Hawaii
Caballeros de Dimasalang Cabugao Sons & Daughters of Hawaii
Candonians of Hawaii
Caoayan ISAH
Cavitenians of Hawaii
Dingras Association of Hawaii
Divine Word College Alumni Association
FilAm Sports USA
Fil American Citizens League
Filipino Business Women's Club
Filipino Nurses Organization of Hawaii
Filipino Women's Civic Club
GUMIL Hawaii
GUMIL Oahu
Hawaii Filipino Women's Club
Hawaii Council of Bilingual Educators
ILAH
Ilocos Norteniens of America
INCAT Alumni Association of Hawaii
International Filipino Society of Hawaii
Kalayaan Phil.-Hi. Int. La Union Circle of Hawaii
Lingayen Gulf Club of Hawaii

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UNITED FILIPINO COUNCIL OF HAWAII

P.O. BOX 498, Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0498

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SCR 67 SD1
Urging the Legislature to Declare September as Language Access Month
Thursday, April 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m.
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conference Room 312

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To: Hon. House Committee on Labor and Public Employment
Hon. Rep. Alex M. Sonson, Chair
Hon. Rep. Bob Nakasone, Vice Chair
Hon. Members of the House Committee on Labor and Public Employment

From: Bryan Andaya, President, United Filipino Council of Hawaii

My name is Bryan Andaya. I am the president of the United Filipino Council of Hawaii (UFCH). I submit this testimony to strongly support SCR 67 on behalf of UFCH, an umbrella organization with member organizations from six islands. Current membership includes a total of 5,000 individual members.

At our annual convention in July 2007, our delegates passed a resolution to address disparities faced by Filipinos and other underserved groups. The right to language access in order to utilize government services is a social justice issue. It is unbelievable that some still see this as a costly burden, rather than an opportunity for retrofitting an unequal system. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects against discrimination. Even after 43 years since its passage, a significant segment of Filipinos, other immigrant groups, and Pacific Islanders who have limited proficiency in speaking English, continue to be handicapped while attempting to navigate through government institutions for jobs, schools, health care, legal services, and more. We are pleased to do all we can to support your leadership to advance this resolution and to implement the intent of civil rights laws.

Filipinos in Hawai'i want to contribute to the capacity building progress of language access in the 21st century. Language access underlies the very foundation of civil, democratic, peaceful, and productive societies. Please help us make this possible with public awareness and education on language access for Hawai'i's children of all generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony. We humbly ask your help to vote yes to this resolution.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan P. Andaya, President
United Filipino Council of Hawaii

*2006-07

**2007-08