
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii is a melting
2 pot of diverse nationalities and cultures. Diversity defines
3 Hawaii's residents and makes this State a unique place to live.

4 The legislature also finds that according to the 2000
5 United States Census, over twelve per cent of the State's
6 residents speak English "less than very well." These residents
7 face daily challenges, whether it is struggling to consult with
8 a school counselor about their child's performance at school or
9 to understand a notice regarding public housing benefits.

10 The legislature further finds that as only one of four
11 states to enact a statewide law on language access, Hawaii is on
12 the leading edge of breaking down language barriers to enable
13 its diverse population, particularly persons who are limited in
14 their English language proficiency, to gain equal access to
15 much-needed government services at no extra charge. Whether the
16 State provides access to its services and programs through an
17 interpreter or translates key documents needed to access its
18 services, residents with limited English proficiency benefit by

1 being able to fully participate in the community as self-
2 sufficient and productive members of the community. Ongoing
3 education and efforts are needed to ensure that language access
4 becomes the norm in the provision of government services.

5 The purpose of this Act is to designate the month of
6 September as "Language Access Month" to promote awareness of
7 language access for government services and emphasize the
8 importance of and need for language access in Hawaii's diverse
9 society.

10 SECTION 2. Chapter 8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
11 by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to
12 read as follows:

13 "§8- Language access month. The month of September
14 shall be known and designated as "Language Access Month" to
15 promote awareness of language access for government services and
16 emphasize the importance of and need for language access in
17 Hawaii's diverse society. This month is not and shall not be
18 construed as a state holiday."

19 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

20 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Report Title:

Holidays; Language Access Month

Description:

Designates the month of September as language access month to promote awareness of language access for government services and to emphasize the importance of and the need for language access in Hawaii. (SD1)