

March 5, 2009

Senator Brian T. Taniguchi
Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary & Government Operations
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI, 97813

Aloha Senator Taniguchi, and members of the Committee

My name is Mary Santa Maria and I am testifying regarding the confirmation of my nomination **GM 354** to the Language Access Advisory Council. I am a resident of Maui, I live in Pukalani, and work at the Maui District Health Office as a Public Health Educator. Decreasing health disparities as a result of language and cultural barriers has been a focus of my public health work for several years. My years as a Peace Corps volunteer, and public health educator have given me direct experience with the barriers created as a result of limited language and cultural proficiency not only in health care, but in relation to all government services. I see the work of the Language Access Advisory Council as a vital tool in supporting the increased cultural competency of our State offices, and thereby decreasing disparities in access, to all services, and especially for health care.

I perceive the Language Access Advisory Council to have the role of consultant and advisor to the to the Office of Language Access in the Department of Labor regarding the implementation of the State Language Access Law in State offices as well as other entities that receive State funding. I believe that with my position as a State Department of Health Public Health Educator I have an understanding of the current level of implementation of the LAL on Maui. I also have worked with many community agencies, as well as the County of Maui in many different settings and projects, and therefore have a good idea of the work needed on Maui to achieve compliance with the LAL.

I am currently acting president of the Maui Interpreter Hui which is a group that was formed in 2007 in order to network with other interpreters and to facilitate interpreting skills improvement. The Maui Interpreter Hui has trainings for persons who act as interpreters in their worksite and in the community, and I am one of the trainers. I am also a trained medical interpreter, and function as such for DOH staff such as Public Health Nursing and WIC. Through my role as Public Health Educator I have trained MDHO and other State employees who work with interpreters on the correct use of interpreters, as well as the Language Access Law itself. I have also trained several bilingual staff members to improve their services as interpretation providers for DOH programs. During my vacations I often volunteer as medical interpreter. I have had many opportunities to realize the importance and timeliness of the Language Access initiative. I believe that my participation on the Council will directly benefit the people of Maui County as well as the Office of Language Access. It is my vision to see that all of the

State and County offices and their contracted providers in Maui County have a clear understanding of their obligation to comply with the law, and to ensure that they are aware of how to do so.

I care about the needs of those in Hawaii with limited English proficiency. They deserve as equal access to services as is possible. My personal experiences receiving and providing language services and as a public health professional give me clear vision of the benefits of the LAL. I am also dedicated and responsible to my commitments. All of these qualities will serve to effectively advise the OLA on implementation of the LAL, especially in regards to Maui County.

I would like to share with you a recent occurrence on Maui. This situation was referred to me by one of the clerks in the Maui District Health Office because she is aware of my interest and participation with the OLA. She received a letter from a local bi-lingual case manager who described what I think is an all too common occurrence , how one of the her non-English speaking clients recently endured labor and delivery without an interpreter. The patient had brought her own interpreter with her, but this interpreter needed to leave before the actual delivery. The patient requested an interpreter, but of course no one understood. The child's name was incorrectly recorded on the birth certificate. The case manager was requesting help from the DOH in getting the name corrected. This is usually a long arduous process, however, once contacted, the hospital realized their error and agreed to take responsibility for the change. Even though the situation with the name change was resolved, the case manager was concerned that no attempt was made in the hospital to obtain interpreter services. I also am concerned. I keep wondering how that would be for me, what if there had been complications, and just why did no one get an interpreter? I really would like to see the day when this type of event is history. .

I cannot at this time anticipate any conflict of interest with my participation on the Language Access Advisory Council. It would be an honor to serve on this Council and I appreciate your consideration for a position representing Maui.

Mahalo and aloha,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Santa Maria".

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TO: Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Honorable Dwight Y. Takamine, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Government Operations

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

RE: **Testimony in Support of GM 354 (MARY F. SANTA MARIA)**
Language Access Advisory Council

HEARING: Tuesday, March 17, 2009, 9:30 a.m., Room 016

Good morning, Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Government Operations:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am Serafin "Jun" Colmenares, the Executive Director with the Office of Language Access (OLA). The OLA strongly supports the confirmation of Mary F. Santa Maria to the Language Access Advisory Council as a representative of the County of Maui.

Ms. Santa Maria is a new Council member who is a Public Health Educator with the Maui District Health Office and the Chronic Disease Prevention Branch of the Department of Health. She is involved with language access, medical interpreting training, and health services access for Limited English Proficient persons at community and state agencies. Ms. Santa Maria holds a Master's degree in public health from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and is a certified trainer for Cross Cultural Health's "Bridging the Gap" medical interpreters training.

For these reasons, Ms. Santa Maria is an excellent candidate to be confirmed on the Language Access Advisory Council.

February 20, 2009

Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary & Government Operations
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 219
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawaii 97813

Dear Chairman Taniguchi and members of the Committee:

I am writing to recommend the appointment of Ms. Mary Santa Maria to the state's Language Access Advisory Council (LAAC). As a former fellow student, colleague, and longtime friend, I have known Mary since 1991 when we entered a fellowship program as graduate students in the first cohort of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers at the University of Hawaii (UH) School of Public Health. Since graduating from UH in 1993, Mary and I have remained close friends and colleagues, and have supported each other in our many separate pursuits. It is my pleasure to address her qualifications to serve as a new member of the Council.

I have always known Mary to be a dedicated public servant and an advocate of the most marginalized, disenfranchised and silent minority segments of our society. In her capacity as a public health educator for the Hawaii State Department of Health and its district health offices on the Big Island and Maui, Mary has dedicated the past 15 years of her career to efforts to decrease health disparities and improve health outcomes in the islands. Recognizing that language and cultural barriers are significant factors contributing to health disparities, Mary sees opportunities through the Council to impact health outcomes in Hawaii by contributing to strategic policy and systems level change.

Mary's keen interest in and appreciation for diversity has fueled a life-long quest to broaden her knowledge and understanding of other cultures and languages. Certainly her experience living and working overseas, in several non-English speaking countries, has provided insight regarding the day-to-day challenges facing individuals with limited language proficiency. Additionally, Mary's training as a medical interpreter and medical interpreter trainer will be of value to the Council, helping the Council to frame the unique challenges of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations in Hawaii. Note that through the medical interpretation program Mary has found a way to merge her knowledge of and passion for other cultures and languages with her expertise in health promotion and disease prevention. I believe service on the Council will likewise present an opportunity to merge her passion and expertise for the benefit of Hawaii's LEP community.

Mary's extensive network, one that includes well established and trusted relationships with leaders in Hawaii's Spanish speaking community, may also be of value to the

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Council in its efforts to engage community leaders to facilitate public education about the Language Access Law and the right to equal access under the law to federal, state and county services. Certainly Mary's relationships within the state system and, in particular, on Maui will help to facilitate communications and outreach education efforts proposed by the Council and the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. Know that in my work as director of the Cancer Information Service at the UH Cancer Research Center, I have relied on Mary's relationships within the Spanish-speaking community on Maui in disseminating cancer information to medically underserved populations. More recently, Mary has been helpful in directing me to local experts knowledgeable about the Language Access Law and requirements related to the informed consent process.

As to her character, Mary is known among her friends and colleagues to be passionate in her beliefs, and as a professional, very dedicated, trustworthy and highly principled. At this point in her career, Mary has the experience, maturity and wisdom necessary to advise the Office of Language Access, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. Given her dedication to this cause – that of eliminating language and cultural barriers to services, and the combined knowledge and experience that she will bring to the Language Access Advisory Council, I wholeheartedly recommend her appointment.

Should you have any questions regarding my endorsement of Ms. Mary Santa Maria, please feel free to contact me at 808-564-5923.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hali Robinett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "H".

Hali Robinett, MPH

**Senator Brian Taniguchi and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and
Government Operations
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 97813
February 19, 2009**

Dear Senator Taniguchi and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of Mary Santa Maria as the Maui County representative to the State of Hawaii Language Access Advisory Board.

Mary has been committed to and passionate about the issue of improving language access for as long as I have known her and many years before. Fluent in Spanish and a highly skilled health educator, Mary has shown leadership skills and hard work in training interpreters and promoting cultural competence on Maui. Due to her position as a health educator and her service on committees such as the Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition and the Maui Interpreters Hui, Mary is well poised to understand the unique challenges of Maui service providers and clients of those services. Her input will help assure that the neighbor island perspective on language access is heard at the state level.

After first taking the Bridging The Gap interpreter training as a participant in 2006, Mary helped establish the Maui Interpreters Hui to continue the important work of training interpreters and introducing agencies to the complexities and ethics of language interpretation. Mary completed the Bridging the Gap Training for Trainers in 2007 and thus became certified by Cross Cultural Health Programs to teach a basic interpreting curriculum to new or untrained medical interpreters. She has since co-taught the course several times on Maui, and has demonstrated her commitment to continuing and expanding the work of the Hui.

Since joining the Language Access Advisory Board, Mary has provided me with updates on progress towards implementation of the Language Access Law. She has explained the work of the Office on Language Access and her wish to help Maui agencies learn about the Law and how to implement it.

Maui faces significant language access challenges: the vastness of our foreign language populations for such a small population; funding limitations due to the small scale of our island; few trained and experienced interpreters; and isolation from O'ahu. Maui needs a committed and active liaison to the Language Access Advisory Board, a position which I feel Mary Santa Maria is abundantly qualified to fill.

I fully support Mary Santa Maria's membership on the Language Access Advisory Board, and I hope you will come to the same conclusion.

Sincerely,



Rachel Heckscher

**Public Health Educator, Hawaii State Department of Health
Coordinator, Maui County Health Volunteers**

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Date: Sun, 15 Mar 2009 08:41:40 -1000

Subject: Testimony in Support of GM 354 (Mary F. Santa Maria)

Hearing: Tuesday, March 17, 2009, 9:30 am Room 016

To: The Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
The Honorable Dwight Y. Takamine, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Government Operations.

From: Tin Myaing Thein, Ph.D. Pacific Gateway Center

Dear Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Government Operations:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the confirmation of Mary F. Santa Maria to the Language Access Advisory Council. I am Tin Myaing Thein, Executive Director of the Pacific Gateway Center.

Mary F. Santa Maria is a Public Health Educator with the Maui District Health Office and the Chronic Disease Prevention Branch of the Department of Health. As such, she has first hand knowledge in issues relating to language access, medical interpreting and the impact it has on the health services for those with limited English language proficiency. Mary holds a Masters in Public Health from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and is also a certified trainer for Cross Cultural Health's " Bridging the Gap" medical interpreters training.

With her experience, and knowledge, Mary will be a definite asset to the Council. We need the perspective of the medical issues which are critical in the deliberations and discussion of the Language Access Advisory Council. As an organization providing language interpretation and translation services, Pacific Gateway Center strongly supports the confirmation of Mary F. Santa Maria to the Language Access Advisory Council. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Aloha,
Tin Myaing Thein