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TO: Honorable Joey Manahan, Chair
Honorable James Kunane Tokioka, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Tourism, Culture and International Affairs

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

RE: **Testimony in Support of HCR194/ HR157**
Hearing: March 30, 2009, 9:40 a.m., Conference Room 312

Good morning, Members of the Committee on Tourism, Culture and International Affairs:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am Serafin “Jun” Colmenares, and I am the Executive Director with the Office of Language Access (OLA). The OLA supports HCR194/HR157 for the creation of a task force to study language access within Hawaii’s tourism industry.

Visitors from abroad who arrive in Hawaii may have limited English proficiency (“LEP”). Where language is a barrier, it can hinder them from fully enjoying all that Hawaii has to offer. The availability of language access through appropriate signs or an interpreter at the airport, for example, can be vital components to ensuring that visitors have a smooth, optimal stay in here in the islands so they will want to return to visit Hawaii again, and also to ensure that they are aware of and abide by our laws.

The OLA supports the intent of these measures to the extent that they further the goals of the state Language Access Law (enacted by the Legislature in 2006 and signed into law by Governor Lingle) to ensure meaningful access to state-funded services, programs and activities by persons with limited English proficiency.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.