

**SB 312**



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
**OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 322  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
www.hawaii.gov/labor/ola  
Phone: (808) 586-8730 / Fax: (808) 586-8733  
Email: ddir.ola@hawaii.gov

TO: Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Honorable Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair  
Members of the Committee on Human Services

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

RE: **Testimony in Support of SB312**  
Committee on Human Services  
Hearing: February 5, 2009, 1:15 p.m., Conference Room 016

I. OVERVIEW OF CURRENT PROPOSED LEGISLATION

SB312 proposes to establish a new holiday by designating September as Language Access Month. A new section would be added to establish the month in Hawaii Revised Statutes, Chapter 8, Holidays. The month and any days within the month would not be construed as a state holiday or as state holidays. No funding is requested.

II. CURRENT LAW

Under the current law, there is no existing statute that designates a language access month. The following non-state holidays that have been designated do not include language access:

**Day**

Arbor Day	Father Damien DeVeuster Day	Ocean Day
Buddha Day	Kupuna Recognition Day	Peace Day
Baha'i New Year's Day	Lei Day	Queen Lili'uokalani Day
Bodhi Day	Makahiki Commemoration Day	Respect for Our Elders Day
Caregiver Recognition Day		

**Week**

Asian Lunar New Year Commemoration Week

**Month**

Children and Youth Day and Month	Filipino-American History Month	Financial Literacy Month
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In addition, there is no corresponding federal language access day, week or month.

### III. SB312

The Office of Language Access (OLA) supports the intent of SB312.

According to the 2000 Census, Hawai'i ranks as fourth among states with the largest foreign born population, which is approximately 17.9%. As a result, Hawai'i is rich with cultural diversity amongst its residents. Along with this diversity, there exist language barriers for those who are not fluent in the English language; also known as persons with limited English proficiency (LEP).

The legislature recognized this existence of the language barrier and passed the language access law in 2006 to ensure equal access to state programs, services and activities for LEP persons. The law includes requiring state agencies to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful language services either through the oral language services of an interpreter or written language services in a translated document. The continued celebration of Language Access Month each year will serve to foster and promote these language access activities in Hawai'i and inform the public of its existence, so that language access can be seen not as an extra but rather as a vital component in the state's provision of basic government services. At the same time, it is a celebration of Hawai'i's diversity.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

February 2, 2009

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF  
SENATE BILL 312

TO: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland  
The Honorable Les Ihara  
Members of the Committee on Human Services

FROM: Robin H. Kobayashi, Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 312



EQUALITY  
OPPORTUNITY  
HOPE

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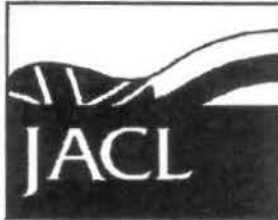
The Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center ("the Justice Center") f/k/a Na Loio is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that provides legal services to and advocates for the rights of indigent immigrants and their families. The Justice Center supports Senate Bill No. 312.

Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of non-English speakers in Hawaii increased by more than three-quarters, from 14.7 percent to 26.1 percent. See FAIR.org, [http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research\\_researchddd47](http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research_researchddd47). In 2000, about 47.5% of all individuals who said they spoke a language other than English said they spoke English less than very well. *Id.*

A month dedicated to language access, as this bill proposes, will raise awareness. Such awareness is essential for ensuring that those who are limited English proficient continue to surmount barriers to basic needs. A month dedicated to language access will also demonstrate Hawaii's continued sensitivity to and acceptance of different cultures in this diverse and rich State.

The Justice Center is well aware of the language barriers that prevent individuals who speak languages other than English to obtain basic, necessary services. Since 1983, the Justice Center has provided advice, referrals, and full case representation services for more than 13,000 individuals who speak more than 20 different languages. Many of these individuals do not speak English well, and must have access to essential government services. For these reasons, the Justice Center support Senate Bill No. 312.

Thank you for your time and opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.


**JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE**
**HONOLULU CHAPTER**
**P.O. BOX 1291, HONOLULU, HAWAII 96807**
**PHONE: 523-8464**
*Working For A Greater America*
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 Alan Murakami

**SB 312: Relating to Language Access  
 Testimony in Support**
**Hearing: Thursday, February 5, 2009 at 1:15 p.m. in Conf. Rm 0165**

 To: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
 The Honorable Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair  
 Members of the Committee on Human Services

The JACL Hawai'i, Honolulu Chapter strongly supports SB 312, which 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 Hawai'i.

Founded in 1929, the Japanese American Citizens League is the nation's oldest and largest Asian Pacific American Civil Rights organization made up of over 20,000 members. Locally, we are a strong civil rights organization committed to the protection of civil and human rights of all.

On July 10, 2006, the legislature enacted Act 290, which codified Chapter 371, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, "to provide for effective and timely communication between all levels of government and individuals who are precluded from using public services due to language barriers." We believe that the passage of SB 312 will encourage the State of Hawai'i to recognize and take steps to providing meaningful access to those who are limited English proficient to public services.

Our history of advocacy on behalf of immigrants and ongoing mission to preserve the rights of all who fall victim to social injustice, compels us to work to ensure all in our State are afforded dignity and access to services. The JACL Hawai'i urges you to pass SB 312 to promote and encourage equal access to public services for all members of Hawai'i's community. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

 Shawn L.M. Benton  
 President, JACL Hawai'i, Honolulu Chapter  
 Japanese American Citizens League



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun-Oakland, Chair of the Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Stella M. Q. Wong  
Stella M.Q. Wong, Vice President of Programs

DATE of Hearing: Thursday, February 5, 2009  
1:15 p.m., Room 016

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of SB312

Senator Chun-Oakland and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, my name is Stella Wong and I am the Vice President of Programs at Catholic Charities Hawaii.

I am testifying in support of SB312, relating to designating the month of September as the "Language Access month" in the State of Hawaii. Through our work with immigrants, elderly and other new comers, we are aware that there is a sizable group of residents who are limited English proficient and have language barriers accessing services to public resources which they need and are eligible for.

We believe that designating September as the "Language Access Month" would encourage greater attention of all State programs and community resources to serve those who are Limited English proficient or non-English speaking which will truly advance our State to be a State of aloha to all.

I urge your committee to forward this bill for passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at 535-0889 or [swong@catholiccharitieshawaii.org](mailto:swong@catholiccharitieshawaii.org) if I could provide further information.



## **CONGRESS OF VISAYAN ORGANIZATIONS**

99-1325 Aiea Heights Drive, Aiea, HI 96701

TO: Sen. Suzanne Chun-Oakland  
Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services

DATE OF HEARING: Thursdday, February 5, 2009  
1:15 p.m., Room 016

SUBJECT: Testimony in strong support of SB312

Mr. Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services. My name is Margarita L. Hopkins, president of the Congress of Visayan Organizations, the statewide umbrella of Visayan organizations in Hawaii.

I am testifying in strong support of SB312, Relating to Language Access, which designates the month of September as "language access month" in the State of Hawaii. Hawaii is a multilingual state. Many of our residents are limited English proficient and face difficulty gaining access to government services, programs and activities because of language barriers. There is a need to promote awareness of language access for government services and to emphasize the importance of and need for language access in Hawaii. Having a month designated for language access is one way of promoting public awareness and education about this important issue.

We therefore urge your committee to approve this bill.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Very truly yours,

MARGARITA HOPKINS  
President



# UNITED FILIPINO COUNCIL OF HAWAII

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

## **TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 312**

Senate Committee on Human Services

Feb. 5, 2009, 1:15 p.m.

Hawai'i State Capitol, Rm. 016

## **RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS**

**To:** Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair; Sen. Les Ihara, Vice-Chair; Sen. Josh Green, M.D. ;  
Sen. Fred Hemmings

**From:** Eddie Agas, President, United Filipino Council of Hawaii

**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.

My name is Eddie Agas. I am the president of the United Filipino Council of Hawaii (UFCH). I submit this testimony to strongly support this bill on behalf of UFCH, an umbrella organization with member organizations from six islands. UFCH membership is comprised of nearly 5,000 individual members.

The worse our economy gets, the greater the need for community partnerships. Filipinos, along with many other ethnic groups with ties to their countries of origin, and the languages of their ancestors, have worked tirelessly with civil rights activists and the Hawai'i state legislature to ensure that government policies and services are accessible to all people through language access. Enactment of Act 290, Hawai'i's progressive language access law, was the first successful step taken after many attempts since the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This bill to observe September as Language Access Month offers another institutional step to raise awareness and take actions to implement this law.

Like many immigrant families, UFCH members know the benefits and rewards in society, as well as within families, of enduring inter-generational struggles when English is not their first language. We know the pain, and respect the struggles of the younger generations who want to recover their heritage languages, and of their elders, who have seen their ancestral tongue(s) disappear and replaced with alienation in only one generation in America. Language Access Month will foster family strength, inter-cultural communication, respect for differences, and unity to help one another, especially during times of crisis and sacrifice.

As President Barack Obama reminds us, "Our diversity defines us, not divides us." Thank you for hearing this bill. The simple act of passing this bill is the key to solve complex problems today and for generations to come. Your leadership is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Eddie Agas, President, United Filipino Council of Hawaii



# Filipino American Citizens League

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

## TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 312

Senate Committee on Human Services

Feb. 5, 2009, 1:15 p.m.  
Hawai'i State Legislature, Room 016

Measure Title: RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS

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.

To: Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Sen. Les Ihara, Vice-Chair  
Senate Human Services Committee Members  
Sen. Josh Green, M.D. & Sen. Fred Hemmings

From: Jake Manegdeg, President, Filipino American Citizens League

My name is Jake Manegdeg. I am the president of the Filipino American Citizens League. 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 submit this testimony to strongly support this bill. Even though Hawaii was successful in enacting a Language Access Law, much work is yet to be done to support our government to not only comply on paper with "plans", but to ensure that government officials and their staff have the commitment to implement the intent of the law, in spite of dwindling resources. No excuse is acceptable when it comes to providing access to government services, especially with regard to emergency preparedness.

Thank you for the chance to provide support for this bill. Your help in its passage is greatly appreciated.

Very Sincerely,

Jake Manegdeg  
President  
Filipino American Citizens League



## TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 312

Senate Committee on Human Services

Feb. 5, 2009, 1:15 p.m. | Hawai'i State Legislature | Conference Room 016

Measure Title: RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.  
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.

To: Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair & Sen. Les Ihara, Vice-Chair  
Senate Human Services Committee Members Sen. Josh Green, M.D. & Sen. Fred Hemmings

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

My name is Charlene Cuaresma. As president of the Filipino Coalition for Solidarity, I want to express appreciation to you for hearing this important bill. 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.

I am submitting testimony in strong support of this bill to recognize the multi-lingual assets and multi-cultural climate of diversity that makes Hawai'i unique. Hawai'i leads the United States of America with the highest percentage of non-white people. The U.S. Census lists at least 25 categories of languages spoken in Hawai'i with a respective array of additional language sub-groups. Hawai'i ranks fourth in the nation for the greatest percentage of foreign-born residents by state. Filipinos comprised 61% of the State's immigrant groups, which is larger than all immigrant groups combined. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, 10 % of Filipinos were reported to be in linguistically isolated households in the Counties of Hawai'i, Honolulu and Kaua'i. Maui County reported 16% of linguistically isolated Filipino households. Filipinos reporting to be limited English proficient or speaks English less than very well were 16% in Hawai'i County, 23% in Honolulu County, 20% in Kaua'i County, and 30% in Maui County.

But all people in Hawai'i, whether English is their first language or not, will benefit from this proposed designation of September as Language Access Month. Language Access Month will encourage goodwill to help one another--from making friends with different people at school, work, and in the community; to the vital exchange of commerce in swap meets, shopping malls, or on the inter-net; to exchanging wedding vows with whomever one pleases; and most especially to providing access to government services.

We ask that our lawmakers pass this bill to protect everyone's civil rights to communicate and to be understood in the transactions of our daily lives in our Aloha State. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Respectfully,

Charlene Cuaresma, MPH  
President, Filipino Coalition for Solidarity



## TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 312

Senate Committee on Human Services

Feb. 5, 2009, 1:15 p.m.  
Hawai'i State Legislature  
Conference Room 016

Measure Title: RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.  
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.

To: Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair & Sen. Les Ihara, Vice-Chair  
Senate Human Services Committee Members  
Sen. Josh Green, M.D. & Sen. Fred Hemmings

My name is Amy Agbayani and I strongly support SB 312. Hawai'i is one of four states with a progressive language access law that sets precedence for the rest of the nation in protecting the civil rights of individuals to access government services.

As Vice Chair of the National Federation of Filipino American Associations Region XII, which represents the interests of Filipinos in Hawai'i, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands, we support September as Language Access Month. This bill can foster strategic actions to raise community awareness, increase public and private sector knowledge of language access policies, and support government agencies to build their capacity to provide language access for all.

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.

Sincerely,

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



# OAHU FILIPINO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

P.O. Box 17531 • Honolulu • Hawaii 96817

## Unit Organizations

Alliance of Residential  
Carehome Administrators  
Aloha Saguibsib Cultural  
Foundation, Inc.  
Annac ti Bado iti Hawaii  
Annac ti Batac  
Annac ti Caoayan 2002  
Annac ti Kailokuan iti  
America  
Annac 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

## TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 312

Senate Committee on Human Services

Feb. 5, 2009, 1:15 p.m. • Hawai'i State Capitol • Rm. 016

## RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS

To:

Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

Sen. Les Ihara, Vice-Chair

Senate Human Services Committee Members:

Sen. Josh Green, M.D.

Sen. Fred Hemmings

From:

Cirvalina Longboy, President

Oahu Filipino Community Council

My name is Cirvalina Longboy, president of the Oahu Filipino Community Council. OFCC is an umbrella organization that represents a network of non-profit civic groups with a unified vision to improve the lives of our Filipino communities.

I submit this testimony to strongly support this bill. OFCC leaders were staunch supporters in the passage of Act 290 in 2006. We are grateful to legislators who had the political will to see it enacted. Today, we are returning because while progress is being made toward government agencies and their contractors having a language access plan in their file cabinets, much more work lies ahead to actually provide access to government services to people whose first language is not English. For example, through community networks, Civil Defense officials only recently learned of Cambodian, Laotian and Thai farmers who needed assistance from the ravages of rain in Waialua and Haleiwa last December. A Language Access Month would promote community partnerships to move forward collaboratively, especially during the economic downturn in our State and in the nation. Thank you for hearing this important bill. OFCC encourages you to please vote yes.

Sincerely,

Cirvalina Longboy, President

Oahu Filipino Community Council

## Unit Organizations

Magsingal Association of  
Hawaii  
Narvacan/San Antonio Club of  
Hawaii  
Nueva Vizcaya Association of  
Hawaii  
Pasuquinios 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  
TCP  
Kalihi 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  
Santa Marians of Hawaii  
School Alumni  
Santa Nicolas Nat. High  
School Bingao Annex  
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



# *Nursing Advocates & Mentors, Inc.*

*... a non-profit organization with a mission to address the global nursing shortage by providing guidance and assistance for nursing colleagues to obtain their professional license in nursing.*

P.O. Box 2034 Aiea, HI 96701  
E-mail: [bramosrazon@aol.com](mailto:bramosrazon@aol.com)

## TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 312

Senate Committee on Human Services

Feb. 5, 2009, 1:15 p.m. | Hawai'i State Legislature | Room 016

### RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS

To: Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Sen. Les Ihara, Vice-Chair  
Senate Human Services Committee Members:  
Sen. Josh Green, M.D. ; Sen. Fred Hemmings

From: Beatrice Ramos-Razon, RN, FACDONA  
President, Nursing Advocates and Mentors, Inc. (NAMI)

My name is Beatrice Ramos Razon. As the founder and president of NAMI (Nursing Advocates & Mentors, Inc.), we are in strong support of this bill. NAMI's membership is comprised of over 75 volunteer nurses, instructors, allied health care professionals, and Filipino leaders, who are dedicated to improve the health of Hawai'i's people by addressing not only a statewide, but worldwide nursing shortage through the training and mentoring of foreign medical graduate nurses, many of whom come from underprivileged backgrounds, to pass Hawai'i's nurses board exams.

For the majority of our NAMI volunteer board of directors, volunteer nurse instructors, and mentors, English is not our first language. Designating 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 Hawai'i is a vital step to protect all people's civil rights. As nurses, and as individuals who speak more than one language, we can appreciate the difficulties of building the competencies and capacity to communicate. Setting September as Language Access Month is a positive and doable way to promote collaborative partnerships to achieve language access for all who seek help from government agencies.

Thank you for hearing this bill. Please vote yes.

Sincerely,

Beatrice Ramos-Razon, RN, FACDONA  
President, Nursing Advocates and Mentors, Inc.

Bea Ramos-Razon, RN,  
FACDONA  
President

Tessie Oculito, RN  
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Tielito Lyn Matias, RN, BSN

Brenda Monegas, RN

Oscar Querido, RN

Lucy Porte, RNC

Violeta Sadural, RN, BSN

Tina Salvador, RN, BSN, CNN

Ramon Sumibcay, CPT, AN

# TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 312

Senate Committee on Human Services  
Feb. 5, 2009, 1:15 p.m. | Hawai'i State Legislature | Room 016

## RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS

To: Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Sen. Les Ihara, Vice-Chair  
Senate Human Services Committee Members:  
Sen. Josh Green, M.D. ; Sen. Fred Hemmings

From: Raymund Ll. Liongson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor & Coordinator  
Philippine Studies Program  
Arts & Humanities Division  
UH-Leeward Community College

My name is Raymund Liongson, assistant professor and coordinator of Philippine Studies at Leeward Community College. I would like to register my strong support for **SB 312**, calling for the designation of September as **Language Access Month**. I am convinced that this bill, when passed, would help promote awareness of language access for government services and would underscore the importance of and the need for language access in Hawai'i. This would certainly advance the recognition of the rights of our multi-lingual people in Hawaii.

Let us break the language barrier that, for so long a time now, has unfairly denied people the human and moral right they deserve.

Thank you for deciding on the side of our linguistically marginalized population.

Sincerely,

Raymund Ll. Liongson

RAYMUND LL. LIONGSON, PH.D.  
Philippine Studies Program  
Arts & Humanities Division  
UH-Leeward Community College  
96-045 Ala Ike St., Pearl City, HI 96782  
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