

SCR195



UNIVERSITY of HAWAII®
KAPI'OLANI
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Languages, Linguistics & Literature • American Sign Language/Interpreter Education Program

18 March 2010

The Senate

Twenty-Fifth Legislature, 2010, State of Hawai'i

Senate Education and Housing Committee

Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair

Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SCR 195
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH APPROPRIATE REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUALS IN THE DEPARTMENT WHO PROVIDE INSTRUCTION TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING BOTH THOSE WHO HEAR AND THOSE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING, TO INCORPORATE THE USE OF SIGN LANGUAGE AND OTHER MEANS OF COMMUNICATION DURING INSTRUCTION TO ENHANCE THEIR STUDENTS' LEARNING.

The University of Hawai'i-Kapi'olani Community College (UH-KCC) supports the general intent of SRC 195. This testimony also clarifies a few assertions made in that resolution.

Many children with disabilities can benefit from exposure to sign language and sign-supported speech and ideally should have access to educational personnel and direct service providers who can communicate in sign language. Sign language is successfully used in many schools throughout the US to enhance the communication and education of students who have cognitive and physical disabilities. Early intervention specialists, speech language pathologists, parents and siblings of children with disabilities, service providers, health care professionals, teachers and educational paraprofessionals can benefit from having a basic knowledge of ASL. Such knowledge would allow these professionals and family members to communicate with a variety of individuals who may be disabled or deaf/hard of hearing.

UH-KCC houses the American Sign Language/Interpreter Education program and provides ASL courses to all the campuses within the UH System. The program welcomes service providers and pre-service students to take ASL and supports the related schools and departments at UH Manoa to encourage their students to take ASL as an elective. It also collaborates with other community organizations and state agencies that support and serve people who are deaf or have disabilities. The Kapi'olani Deaf Center at UH-KCC has a

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myriad of materials in video and digital formats that are about ASL or produced in ASL. Information about literacy strategies, ASL mentors, sign language for parents and children, evaluating ASL proficiency and effective communication methods are also available.

The American Sign Language/Interpreter Education program provides numerous avenues to study ASL for those who work or plan to work with children who are disabled and it also offers customized training in ASL to agencies and organizations throughout the State. The Hawai'i Department of Education works closely with UH-KCC's programs that prepare educational paraprofessionals to ensure they are qualified to work with children who are disabled or deaf/hard of hearing. Educational Paraprofessionals who graduate from UH-KCC have specific training and ASL proficiency to work with deaf and hard of hearing children. These graduates are also qualified to apply their knowledge and language proficiency to work with special needs children who are not deaf. To work for the HIDOE, Educational Interpreters (EIs), on the other hand, are required to have a degree and hold a professional interpreting credential. They are hired to interpret specifically in classes where there are children who are deaf or hard of hearing. They would not be placed to work solely with children who have disabilities but are not deaf/hard of hearing.

As a point of clarification, a recommendation in the resolution from the report "Educational Implications of the Special Needs of Preschool Age Children with Developmental Disabilities: Report to the 24th Legislature, 2007" made a reference to Total Communication. What they are referring to as "Total Communication" is, in fact, "Simultaneous Communication". Total Communication is an educational philosophy that directed teachers working with students who are deaf/hard of hearing to know and use a full range of communication strategies so they can match the communication needs of each individual child. Somehow that educational philosophy manifested itself in the practice of simultaneously speaking English and signing in manually-coded English. While this approach has proven not to be very successful for students who are deaf/hard of hearing, Simultaneous Communication does have merit when used with children who have cognitive disabilities and other special needs. It then becomes a tool to support the development of speech.

Again, UH-KCC welcomes the opportunity to provide sign language resources for the HIDOE, service providers and families in their quest to enhance their communication with and augment the education provided to children with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan L. Fried, Professor and Coordinator
American Sign Language/Interpreter Education Program

HAWAII DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER

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THE SENATE THE TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION OF 2010

Committee on Education and Housing Testimony in Support of SCR195 Friday, March 19, 2010, 1:45 P.M. Conference Room 225

Chair Sakamoto and Members of the Committee:

I am Louis Erteschik, Staff Attorney at the Hawaii Disability Rights Center, and am testifying in support of this Concurrent Resolution.

We believe it is obviously important that students who are deaf or hard of hearing receive proper education and training. A major component of that is the ability to communicate. Clearly, it is essential for DOE to provide properly trained individuals to teach these students how to communicate. That should encompass professional development, training, and some form of standards to ensure they are competent in their field and their ability to provide that instruction.

We additionally are in support of the provision in this Concurrent Resolution that addresses those students who are not deaf or hard of hearing. We believe that this concept of "total communication" is a wonderful idea. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing need to be able to communicate to the world at large. In the past, we have focused solely on providing sign language instruction to those individuals. Clearly that still may need to be a priority. However, the other component of communication is that those who are receiving the communication need to be able to comprehend the statements and expressions of the individual. The most effective way to achieve that is to begin to provide some instruction to all students in sign language skills. This will greatly facilitate communication for those who are deaf or hard of hearing and will integrate them much more into the full life of the community. We also believe that for those who are fortunate enough to be of sound hearing, it will enable them to appreciate the richness and expressiveness of sign language and will help them develop a greater appreciation for the individuals who live by that every day.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

sakamoto2 - Erin

From: matthewalancohen@gmail.com on behalf of Matthew Cohen
[matthewc@ewhawaii.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2010 12:46 PM
To: EDH Testimony
Cc: Deborah Zimmerman; threestars@hawaii.rr.com; flute866@gmail.com
Subject: Support SCR195: Total Communication

As a father of a boy with autism, i know the difficulties my son experiences in trying to communicate. My son is a smart, capable person and there is nothing wrong with his analytical and logical thinking.

However, he is profoundly disabled in his ability to speak and understand spoken communication. Imagine if when you listened to your parents or teachers, or school mates, you heard all the other conversations going on around you at the same volume, at the same intensity. It would be like watching 12 television channels at once.

My son, and the 100's of other like him, have rights to reasonable accommodations being made for their disabilities. This bill would communicate the specific requirements of that right, which can be confusing for those without experience with autism and other communicative disabilities.

Furthermore, this is only a problem which is going to become more acute until we unravel the sources of autism. If newspaper reports are to be believed, nearly 1% of the us population under 7 has been diagnosed with autism.

I urge all senators and representatives to support SCR195.

--
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March 19, 2010

Testimony re: SCR195

Honorable Senators of the Education Committee,

Today you have the opportunity to extend a helping hand to many students who have problems with communication skills. The recognition of sign language as a tool to reach children with early intervention would improve the lives of many of Hawaii's families. At present there is no provision for this within the DOE or almost any other program except for the school for the deaf. Most students with disabilities are prevented from attending the school for the deaf and so there is really no one addressing this crucial need here in Hawaii.

In California it is standard practice to present sign language to Down Syndrome children when they are little. This stimulates their language and communication skills. It stimulates their cognitive receptors and gives them a means of communication when the muscles in their mouths are not strong enough to articulate words. Later when they develop the muscles in their mouth they are able to communicate and interact much more quickly and appropriately with their verbal skills. It really impacts their overall success in life. It is important to include the family in this process and so we need programs where families can be trained and encouraged in this skill.

In practice I have found good success even now when sign language is used with my son who has Down Syndrome. While he is 15 years old and speaking now he still responds very well to the sign language that he learned as a small child. It would have been so much more successful if we had been able to access sign language for little children when he was an infant. At that time even the programs for children with partial hearing loss, like my son, were not able to include education with sign language.

I hope you will be able to assist in changing this policy and encourage the system to provide more sign language education to the teachers and aides that work with special needs children.

Thank you for your help.

Janet Takushi

From: Melody Youngs [melody.youngs@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, March 19, 2010 10:18 AM
To: EDH Testimony
Subject: Scr195

My name is Melody Youngs and I want to note that this is an essential bill to be passed.

My son is 7 and has been diagnosed with Autism, he is Non verbal but does respond to some sign and picture exchange.

Evaluations with the best speech pathologists have proven that numerous attempts at communication is Vital to our children with or without needs, but especially for kids who cannot communicate on their own, we must encourage by sign, picture exchange, and word what we want them to portray so they can grasp some form of communication. It is a need that the schools have yet to fulfill and must be a requirement.

We must give our children the opportunity of a life where they have a say. We must give a voice to those who do not have their own.

Mahalo,
Melody Youngs
Ezekiel Youngs