

# LATE Testimony

To: The Honorable House Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair  
The Honorable House Representative Jo Jordan, Vice Chair  
Committee on Human Services

From: Joshua R. Beal, MBA

Subject: S.B.127 S.D. 1 - Making a Grant for the Establishment and Operation of  
a Comprehensive Deaf Center (CDC)

I am Joshua R. Beal, MBA, RFC. I submit testimony in **strong support** of S.B. 127 SD1  
- Making a Grant for the Establishment and Operation of a Comprehensive Deaf  
Center.

The proposed S.B.127 S.D.1, to establish CDC would result the funding needed to pursue the development of a "One-Stop" shop for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) population in Hawaii and beyond the Pacific Rim. The CDC is envisioned as centrally located, multi-use complex that will provide medical, educational, technological and human services necessary to enable greater gains in living healthier lives, increasing and maximizing one's human capital, obtaining accessible communications and financial prosperity by the Deaf and HoH community, locally and world-wide.

The CDC would make possible the following areas of opportunity:

**Medical:** Numerous professionals in fields hearing loss pathology such as audiology, speech pathology, hearing aid technology, interpreting and cochlear implants; Medicare/Medicaid applications, processing and counseling; Coordinate and facilitate Cochlear implant surgery for domestic/foreign patients.

**Educational:** Specialized vocational training; Remedial English/Mathematics instruction; Tourism -Hawaii Culture/Sign Language Communications; Tele-education with other countries such as Philippines, China, India; Increased coordination between DOE/UH School System for communication access needs.

**Technological:** Video-Conferencing; Video Relay Service (VRS) technology; Hearing aids/Sound Technology.

**Human Services:** Financial Services -- SSI/SSDI benefits counseling, IRA/Roth benefit planning, IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), FDIC & U.S Treasury programs; Employment Services - Vocational Rehabilitation contract programs for Deaf/Deaf-Blind Adjustment Services, HR Networking for Deaf/HoH hiring practices, Micro-Enterprise Business development for Deaf/HoH.

Funding opportunities exist for the continued operation CDC, to include:

- Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation contracts
- PUC fees from TRS funding
- Social Security/Medicare funding for targeted disabled and low-income groups

- Federal funding programs relating to SBA and Minority Business Enterprises (MBE)
- Grant funding for Vocational and Higher Education programs targeted at the underserved Deaf/HoH population
- Rental and gross fees from professionals conducting business on-site

In Hawaii, based on national statistics for Deaf/HoH population, there is a roughly estimated 1 to 10 ratio for Deaf to Hard of Hearing people with the overall figure reported by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) as 8% of the U.S. population. With these figures extrapolated from a 1.29 million Hawaii population in 2009, the Hawaii Deaf/HoH population would consist of roughly 10,360 Deaf and 93,240 Hard of Hearing individuals.

However, there are an estimated 70 million culturally "Deaf" people who primarily communicate using signed languages. In today's competitive, global economy, there are numerous opportunities for the State of Hawaii, it's members of the Deaf/HoH community across all Islands, beyond in the Pacific Rim, the mainland US and Asia (China/India).

The benefits of the proposed CDC are:

1. Increased financial self-sufficiency and a corresponding reduction in social services, benefits retained by the Deaf/HoH population.
2. Increased coordination, resulting in greater efficiency and efficacy of services to Deaf/HoH population.
3. Developing competitive advantages in the disability services spectrum and becoming a net exporter of services across the Pacific Rim.
4. Increasing the quality of life and resources parents of deaf children, late-deafened individuals or deaf-blind people who are currently isolated from the community.
5. Generating tourism-related revenue from visitors with a hearing loss and also those who are interested in experiencing Deaf culture as part of the "Hawaii" experience.
6. Increased diversity and understanding within Hawaii's communities.

A little about my background; I am the Managing Partner for Schwarz Financial Services LLC, the first and oldest deaf-owned and operated investment company in the nation. I hold a B.A. in Economics from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Additionally, I hold a Masters in Business Administration from Rochester Institute of Technology in Entrepreneurship and am a Professional Fellow Scholar.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 127 SD 1.

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**Sent:** Wednesday, March 16, 2011 6:23 PM  
**To:** HUS testimony  
**Cc:** chie79@tmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for SB127 on 3/17/2011 9:00:00 AM

# **LATE Testimony**

Testimony for HUS 3/17/2011 9:00:00 AM SB127

Conference room: 329  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Eileen Chiwa  
Organization: Individual  
Address:  
Phone:  
E-mail: [chie79@tmail.com](mailto:chie79@tmail.com)  
Submitted on: 3/16/2011

**Comments:**

Having the Comprehensive Deaf Center would be VERY beneficial for the deaf community in the State of Hawaii as well as for those working with the deaf. I concur with the previously submitted testimonies. They have hoped and waited a long time to see it happen. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Dear Senator David Ige, Chair  
Committee on Finances  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Support for SB 127 Making a Grant for the Establishment of a  
Comprehensive Deaf Center

Thank you for your time reading this letter. The message I am writing to you is very important for my husband and me. We both are Deaf. I was born here and I've been in the mainland for 10 years. I met my husband from a Deaf university – Gallaudet University where we graduated. We moved here in 2005 and I was saddened to see things changed in our Deaf community here. Deaf people are true ohana has been spreading apart because we have NO place where we can come together to chat, laugh, do activities and many things we can do together daily. Looking back to all the Deaf people gave me a wonderful personal growth that I missed out growing up. They taught me sign language, fulfilled my Deaf identity and understanding Deaf culture as well.

I returned home to give much knowledge, education, and leadership back to my Deaf community but where is everyone? Where is the place Deaf people come together? Can they come to take workshops? Can they come to enjoy new things? Not easy because we have no place for us. We had Hawaii Services on Deafness in the past but were shut down. We had Aloha Association of the Deaf in the past but were shut down. That's a sad story to tell.

What should we do? I am here to tell you that we need a place, the Comprehensive Deaf Center for everyone, not just Deaf people. Welcome ASL interpreters, ASL students, hard of hearing people, hearing parents of Deaf children, hearing

supporters, and even you. This place gives wonderful services come together to assist everyone above. This place is a community that could give Deaf senior citizens to come together and enjoy crafts, play bingo games, and more. This place could give workshops and trainings that we can learn new things there. That's the purpose why I'm back home to give them knowledge, education and leadership and to develop their own personal growth and to enjoy life of our real world together.

Thank you for listening,  
Christine Holmes

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 17, 2011 7:36 AM  
**To:** HUS testimony  
**Cc:** aslteal1123@me.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for SB127 on 3/17/2011 9:00:00 AM

# **LATE Testimony**

Testimony for HUS 3/17/2011 9:00:00 AM SB127

Conference room: 329  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Linda Lambrecht  
Organization: Individual  
Address:  
Phone:  
E-mail: [aslteal1123@me.com](mailto:aslteal1123@me.com)  
Submitted on: 3/17/2011

**Comments:**

I am a Deaf advocator in Deaf Community for 31 years. I have tried to help our support of CDC for several years, but no luck. At last, there is SB 127. YES! 100% support for DEAF community. Mahalo!

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 17, 2011 7:41 AM  
**To:** HUS testimony  
**Cc:** jrl1963@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for SB127 on 3/17/2011 9:00:00 AM

# LATE Testimony

Testimony for HUS 3/17/2011 9:00:00 AM SB127

Conference room: 329  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: Jeff R. Lambrecht  
Organization: Individual  
Address:  
Phone:  
E-mail: [jrl1963@gmail.com](mailto:jrl1963@gmail.com)  
Submitted on: 3/17/2011

**Comments:**

I am Deaf Advocator in Deaf Community since I moved from Louisiana in 1968. I believe to support CDC for our Deaf Community 100%. Please consider to vote SB 127. Thank you.

Jeff

## **LATE Testimony**

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Committee on Human Services  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Support for SB127- Making a Grant for the Establishment and Operation of a Comprehensive Deaf Center

Dear Chair Mizuno and members of the committee on Human Services

My name is Scott O'Neal and I am a Hawai'i Licensed Clinical Social Worker, contractor with the Departments of Education and Human Services, small business owner for over 10 years, and in private practice as a counselor/therapist – primarily working with the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind. Due to a series of fortunate circumstances I had the opportunity to attend and graduate from Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., with a Masters in Social Work. In case you aren't familiar with it, Gallaudet is the world's only university in which all programs and services are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard of hearing students. I am not deaf.

Coming from Hawai'i, attending Gallaudet and being in Washington, D.C. was an amazing and eye opening experience for me. The Washington, D.C. area has a large Deaf population, has many programs and community services available to people with a hearing-loss, and provides many opportunities for these individuals. In many ways, being deaf in this environment normalizes the lives of those with a hearing-loss and gives them strength to grow and achieve the same things as their hearing counterparts.

There are deaf poor and rich people; deaf doctors and lawyers; deaf janitors and a deaf University President; deaf architects and computer scientists; deaf Masters and Doctorate level clinicians and researchers; deaf store owners and program administrators; deaf substance abusers and peer educators; deaf people of color – experiencing the same challenges as those who are not deaf; and, deaf people who may also be blind or have other developmental disabilities, but are still able to make and achieve whatever goals they are able to set for their lives. The possibilities are endless and it was great for me to witness this. And, I was spoiled.

And then I returned to Hawai'i;

- Where many deaf children graduate from High School with maybe a 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade reading level.
- Where it is possible to count the number of deaf professionals with a college degree, and not all of them are even employed.
- Where there is not one deaf doctor, lawyer, program administrator, or government official.
- Where the number one employment goal for many deaf individuals is to work at Wal-Mart or stocking in a warehouse.
- Where the community is so fragmented, partly due to geographic isolation, people can go for months or years without being able to have a real conversation with another person because they don't have access to anyone else who is able to communicate with them.

- Where low self-esteem and apathy have become such a way of life for the deaf in Hawai`i that many people don't even try to get them to stand up for themselves anymore.
- Where reliance on State and Federal entitlements (Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public assistance) has become the norm, costing the State millions of dollars a year in lost revenue and potential.
- Where families are forced to contact agency after agency, trying to find the supports they need to help their loved ones – and often giving up and just accepting that they will need to care for their deaf family member for the rest of both of their lives.
- And, where those individuals who do actually dream and have potential regularly leave Hawai`i and move to the mainland to seek the opportunities and equality they know exists but that they also know they may never find by staying in Hawai`i.

In the Bill it states “[a center] has been the dream of the deaf community in Hawaii since 1972”. In actuality a Center such as the one being proposed is, AND SHOULD BE, much more than that. It is a right of people with a hearing loss in Hawai`i that has been overlooked and dismissed for far too long. It's so easy to cast aside this need and right by saying “it's too expensive” or “there are other services they can access”, but if that were true, where are the examples of successful local deaf persons and role models to prove this?

No one can argue that a Comprehensive Deaf Center, such as that being proposed, won't benefit the people of Hawai`i. There are models of successful centers in other States, and the benefits to individuals with a hearing loss and the entire community are clear -- a Center would:

- offer an option for a cost-effective, convenient, centralized, and efficient delivery of a wide range of essential programs and service in one space;
- create the ability for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals to become self-sustaining, tax-paying citizens who are prepared for and hold jobs that provide them with an income and are meaningful and rewarding;
- reduce the dependence on State and Federal entitlement programs, saving millions of dollars a year and increasing the overall level of the workforce in Hawai`i;
- enhance communication and literacy skills of deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals and their families;
- and, provide opportunities for self-employment through a micro-enterprise development program.

The ultimate benefit will be improved quality of life for Hawai`i's deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals in the work place, at home, and in the community. Yes it will cost money at the start. And it will require the fragmented Hawai`i community to come together and work together toward a common goal. But, the potential pay-off is enormous.

Because of this, I humbly ask for your support in making this dream/right a reality in Hawai`i. What we do today will change the future. Whether that change results in a more positive future for Hawai`i is in your hands. As have you folks, I have devoted my life to trying to make the changes necessary to improve the lives of those in need. Together I do believe it is possible to make this happen.

Thank you for reading through this and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Scott O'Neal, LCSW