

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

LATE
Testimony

February 3, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Interim Director

SUBJECT: **HB 514 - MAKING A GRANT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND
OPERATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE DEAF CENTER**

Hearing: Thursday, February 3, 2011, 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services as a grant for the establishment of a comprehensive services deaf center.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill. Given the State's current fiscal situation, however, DHS cannot support increases in general fund appropriations beyond what Governor Abercrombie will be proposing in the Executive Biennium Budget for 2012-2013.

DHS currently has a Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Hawaii, Kapiolani Community College Deaf Center/Gallaudet University Regional Center to provide deaf adjustment services and planning, research and grant writing services for laying the groundwork for a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center for

deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind persons. The scope of services includes research and applying for grants to secure funding to finance a Comprehensive Vocational Rehabilitation Center for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Individuals (CVRC). A final report is due to the DHS the end of the project period on September 30, 2011.

DHS does not know how the appropriation amounts in this bill were determined. It seems to be premature to authorize spending for this project without the findings and recommendations of the final report.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

LATE Testimony

February 3, 2011

TO: Representative John Mizuno, Chair
Committee on Human Services
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Support for HB 514 Making a Grant for the Establishment of a Comprehensive Deaf Center

Dear Chair Mizuno and members of the Committee on Human Services,

I am the parent of two deaf children from another island. Professionally, I have been working in the area of Deaf-Blindness for the past 25 years. I am also a member of Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland's Deaf and Blind Task Force and am personally involved with developing a deaf center as a parent, educator and member of my community.

I write in support of HB 514. From my own experiences as a parent I realize how critical a Center is needed. It would have allowed for a much easier emotional and economic/time transition for our girls if all services were centrally located. It also would have helped them become more independent in a faster time, plus make friends and be supported throughout. As a professional in the field of Deafblindness having centralized services would enable people who are deaf and deaf-blind to have a safe environment to socialize, obtain necessary services from agencies who sign and are familiar with deafblindness, deaf people and deaf culture. I am committed to developing that in a Comprehensive Deaf Center in Hawai'i.

I urge you to allocate start up funds so that this center becomes a reality for deaf, deaf-blind and their families thereby enhancing quality of life for all.

Mahalo, for your time and the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Mellanie Lee

Mellanie Lee

From: Roderick Macdonald [rjmacdonald@hawaiiantel.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 02, 2011 4:39 PM
To: HUS testimony
Subject: HB-514 - Testimony of R.J. Macdonald
Attachments: testimony-rjmacdonald.doc

LATE
Testimony

TESTIMONY OF
RODERICK J. MACDONALD

SUBMITTED TO
THE HAWAII STATE LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
REP. JOHN M. MIZUNO, CHAIR

RELATING TO HB 514
"A GRANT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION
OF A COMPREHENSIVE DEAF CENTER"

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2011
9:00 AM, CONFERENCE ROOM 329
HAWAII STATE CAPITOL

Mr. Chairman, my name is Roderick Macdonald. I am originally from New England but have lived here in Hawaii for the past 14 years.

I have been blind since I was three years old, and have been profoundly deaf for most of my life. These are significant obstacles to getting ahead in life, but I have been very fortunate to have had a good education, good training and good support that enabled me to achieve most of my goals in life.

I am retired now, but for 30-odd years I worked as a Computer Specialist, Management Analyst, Policy Analyst, Rehabilitation Teacher for the Blind, and instructor at the Community College and University levels. I could never have done that without being taught to read without sight, listen without hearing and use a computer without either sight or hearing. I've been there, done that, and it would never have come to pass without the skills I learned along the way.

This brings me to the here-and-now: I am here to support, as strongly as I am able, the adoption of House Bill 514 for the establishment of a Comprehensive Deaf Center. I do not represent any agency or organization; I represent only me, myself and I. However, I am a consumer who has had the opportunity to benefit from the types of services this Center will be providing, and I cannot stress too strongly how important these training opportunities have been to me in the past.

Hawaii is a very special place. I use the word "special" as both a superlative and as a challenge, but I would like to focus on the challenging aspect of being a person with a disability in Hawaii.

When I taught my first class here in Hawaii, I had eight students from eight ethnic backgrounds; everyone was a minority of one. Each of these eight students came from a unique cultural background that influenced the individual's approach to learning, about disability and, most of all, about being a person.

I'd like to tell you about one of these students. She was 68 years old, very intelligent and with two advanced degrees from a Mainland university. She lost her eyesight as an adult, and whenever she visited her mother, the family expected her to enter the house through the back door, because they were embarrassed to have people seeing a blind person using a cane enter their front door.

Another of my students had been a school principal on one of the Pacific islands who also lost his vision as an adult. He was very quiet during class and always said "yes" if I asked him if he understood the lesson. But I could tell he wasn't getting it, so we had a chat. He explained to me that he had been brought up to be quiet, respectful and never question authority. I in turn explained to him that I need him to participate in the learning experience by asking questions when he needed answers. We came to an agreement and when this man went home, one of the first things he did was to send me an email on his very new computer to thank me for helping him acquire the skills that enabled him to use a computer.

Yet another of my students told me that her upbringing taught her that a disability was punishment for sins committed in a past life. Another told me that it had been a major decision just to come to the agency seeking help, because her tradition held that it was the family that was responsible for "problems", not public agencies.

The challenges I have mentioned were encountered when I worked as a Rehabilitation Teacher for the Blind at Ho'opono, Hawaii's specialized training facility for the blind. Blindness is Ho'opono's specialty, but they have neither the understanding nor the expertise to deal with hearing loss. Yet the "other" sensory loss affects more people and can be every bit as much of an obstacle to participation and achievement. It was once observed that with blindness, one tends to miss things; but with deafness one tends to miss people.

Many people do not understand that hearing loss is often an "invisible" barrier. If you pass a deaf person on the street and say, "Good morning!", and the other person does not reply, you might well feel the person was rude in not returning your greetings. But the other person is deaf, did not hear your greeting, and very possibly may not have the ability to speak orally. I was once standing on a street corner preparing to cross when a man came up beside me and asked me a question. I did not even know he had asked me a question - I just continued watching the traffic. He became angry and hit me on the shoulder. When I turned to him he started pointing down the street, obviously asking something. I told him I was deaf and could not understand him, and then crossed the street.

Many people "assume" that deaf people can read lips. Some can, but most deaf people find lip reading difficult, at best. For most deaf people communication is via American Sign Language, a unique language separate from English that does not have a written form, so even communicating via written notes can be confusing at times. And because English for most deaf people is a second language they have never heard, simple tasks like reading the instructions printed in English may not be quite so simple.

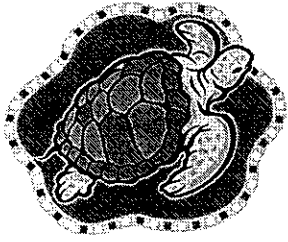
In many situations when a deaf person must interact with hearing individuals - situations that of necessity happen every day - the assistance of a sign language interpreter is needed. One might think that having a third party facilitate the communication between two languages is a great solution, and most of the time it is: The hearing person can speak as usual and the deaf person can "listen" as usual while following American Sign Language, and when it is the deaf person's turn to say something he or she can use ASL, the interpreter repeats the communication in spoken English, and we are all on the same page.

Unfortunately it doesn't always work as planned. While I was working at Ho'opono we had a case meeting to discuss braille instruction for a young deaf woman who was losing her vision. The young woman sat on one side of a long table while her interpreter sat opposite. Everything was fine until one of the staff, sitting beside the deaf woman, became annoyed that she was not looking at him - she kept watching her interpreter. He finally reached out

and shook her by the shoulder, saying "Look at me when I am talking to you!" This was a well-trained professional; he knew quite a bit about vision loss, including the specific eye condition the young woman had, but he did not understand deafness. After that meeting the young woman decided she did not want braille instruction, yet that instruction would have been very useful to her as her progressive vision loss impaired her ability to read printed materials.

So how are deaf people to acquire the skills to work, learn and prosper? How are deaf people to learn to overcome stereotypes and prejudices that prevail in a hearing society? How do deaf people learn to write an effective resume in a language that is not their own? How do deaf people learn to feel positive about themselves, and how do deaf people help their family members overcome that embarrassment and even shame?

Ladies and Gentlemen, I suggest that you have the answer in front of you with the proposal to establish a Comprehensive Deaf Center to address these issues. Please accept my very strong support of this bill.



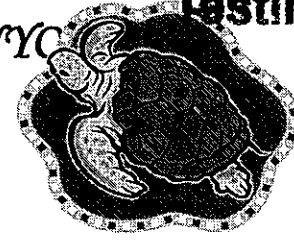
FRANCINE MAE AONA KENYON

dba Kuli Ike Kokua

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LATE
Testimony

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Rep. John Mizuno, Chair

Thursday, February 3, 2011
Conference Room 329

HOUSE BILL NO. 514

**MAKING A GRANT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION
OF A COMPREHENSIVE DEAF CENTER**

Aloha, my name is Francine Mae Aona Kenyon. I am an active, strong Deaf advocate for the civil rights of people who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind in the State of Hawaii.

I am testifying in support of House Bill No. 514, Making a Grant for the Establishment and Operation of a Comprehensive Deaf Center because of three major important reasons: (1) Experiences; (2) Equality; and, (3) Empowerment

Experiences: Based on my actual experiences as deaf consumer, program specialist— coordinator of state agency, and executive director of non-profit organization, imagine yourself being deaf person assuming that Hawaii has similar kinds of services as those on the mainland. Imagine being ignored by the therapist about the provision of sign language interpreters during the counseling sessions due to her inexperience of working intensively with Deaf consumers. Imagine lying down on the mat and being questioned by the therapist in the dark room with the eyes closed. Imagine being insulted by therapist for calling you a "liar" and claiming that you are pretending to act as Deaf person because you can speak well! Imagine Imagine being embarrassed when the therapist yelled at other clients waiting in the lobby that you are deaf and stupid! Imagine being depressed with low self-esteem.

Equality: Again, imagine yourself being deaf person seeking for the administrative or supervisory job. Imagine being told by the human resources personnel the administrative job is for hearing person after informing her that she needs to talk slowly so you can read her lips. "The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community" by Harlan Lane. He spoke about "audism", portraying "hearing establishment" as a colonial power overseeing the needs of deaf subjects. Imagine earning pay less than what other employees get paid on the same job position. Imagine working so hard toward to seeking more funds through many fundraising efforts in order to maintain the operation of the deaf center when other organizations get more moneys successfully through fund-raising events.

Empowerment: Aloha State Association of the Deaf (ASAD) and Hawaii Services on Deafness (formerly Hawaii Center on Deafness) used to be housed at Moiliili Community Center back in 1970's until ASAD moved to Waikiki Community Center. Deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind gathered at Moiliili Community Center and Waikiki Community Center for fellowship, workshops, meetings, and volunteerism. But now there were no ASAD and HSOD offices due to financial difficulties.

We have Ho'opono for the Blind, the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu, Japanese Cultural Center, and many others so why can't we have our own comprehensive deaf center as one-stop center? Having a comprehensive deaf center is OUR DREAM that we cannot afford to lose because deaf people have worked for a very long time to getting their dream to come true. Too many studies were involved and no results have shown.

We empower ourselves to convince the public that we desperately need a comprehensive deaf center so more local deaf graduates from Gallaudet University in Washington, DC., National Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, New York, and many other colleges or universities can return to Hawaii to working in a comprehensive deaf center as executives, administrators, teachers, and professionals!

Thank you very much for letting me testify on behalf of the Deaf community.

I strongly urge you to passing House Bill No. 514 out of the committee for the sake of Deaf community.

Mahalo nui loa for allowing me to testify on this important bill.

Sincerely,

Francine Mae Aona Kenyon
Deaf Advocate

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 02, 2011 9:08 AM
To: HUS testimony
Cc: mariannechung@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Testimony for HB514 on 2/3/2011 9:00:00 AM

LATE Testimony

Testimony for HUS 2/3/2011 9:00:00 AM HB514

Conference room: 329
Testifier position:
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Tien Fook and Marianne Chung
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: mariannechung@hawaii.rr.com
Submitted on: 2/2/2011

Comments:
Committee on Human
Services Hearing scheduled for Feb 3 at 9:00 am



LATE Testimony

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Date: February 2, 2011

Representative John Mizuno, Chair
Committee on Human Services
Hawaii State Capitol
415 Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Support, with Reservations, for HB 514 Making a Grant for the Establishment of a Comprehensive Deaf Center

Dear Chair Mizuno and members of the Committee on Human Services,

I want to express my support, with reservations, for the HB 514 Bill. This bill certainly intends to do right by the Deaf community, however I need to make sure that the Committee is apprised of the current situation of the Deaf community in respect to Self-Determination, Empowerment and Autonomy (SEA).

As a former legislative analyst working in the House Minority Office and later for Representative Ching, I had the privilege of working on this very same committee to report pending legislation. I admire and deeply respect the role of the honorable legislators on this committee.

Please allow me to share a personal experience with you in respect to the state of Deaf services here in Hawaii. When I graduated from UH-Manoa with a degree in Economics, I was the first Deaf person to achieve this distinction. Given the scarcity of opportunity for someone like myself here in Hawaii, Deaf and armed with a degree in Economics, I relocated to Washington DC in search of better opportunities. While I was there I obtained a position at The World Bank Group and later with Schwarz Financial Services LLC, the first deaf-owned and operated financial services firm, where I am now a managing partner with oversight of 5 staff in two office locations.

During this time I sought assistance from the Hawaii State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Deaf Services Division to pursue graduate studies. Much to my surprise, I received a letter saying that, based on my GPA at UH-Manoa, I was not qualified to enter graduate school.

Undeterred by this stunning blow, I persevered and eventually applied for and won a Professional Fellowship at Rochester Institute of Technology to pursue my MBA. This scholarship was a merit-based competition with over 100 deaf applicants nationwide applying for 2 spots. I was awarded this full scholarship in addition to being admitted into the RIT College of Business MBA program on my own merit and subsequently graduating in 2009. Today, I am the only Deaf person in Hawaii with an MBA from an accredited university.

*Securities offered through Royal Alliance Associates, Inc., Member NASD/SIPC,
Investment Advisory Services offered through Schwarz Financial Services LLC, a registered investment adviser
not affiliated with Royal Alliance Associates, Inc.

Why is this story important? It's important that you, the Committee, are made aware of the fact that Hawaii's Deaf community is still struggling with a "Deaf Apartheid". Yes, that is correct, a "Deaf Apartheid".

How do I come to this conclusion? At present, there are 5 major institutions that serve as a gateway for services to the Deaf community here in Hawaii. They are:

- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation- Deaf Services
- American Sign Language/Interpreter Program at KCC
- Hawaii School for Deaf and Blind (HSDB)
- Kapiolani Deaf Center at KCC
- Hawaii Interpreter Services

There are several other entities which provide services to the Deaf such as Hawaii Center for Independent Living, Island Skills Gathering and numerous medical providers such as audiologist, speech pathologists and such.

All of these institutions providing services for the Deaf are represented, at the executive director level, by individuals who are not Deaf. This extends to current Vocational Rehabilitation contracts which are awarded to individuals who are not deaf. Indeed, there is a whole industry of professionals, none who are Deaf, who exercise control the Hawaii Deaf community's destiny.

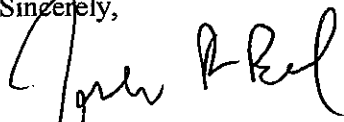
In no way do I intend to demean the efforts of these individuals who currently are acting as the gatekeepers of the Deaf community, but I do want to raise the issue of Self-Determination, Empowerment and Autonomy in relation to the proposed bill. These individuals, I'm certain mean well, however they have made a choice to become involved in the Deaf community, whether by profession, by adopting a deaf child or becoming an Interpreter. I am thankful for their efforts.

However, we the Deaf community, did not arrive at this place by choice. Becoming Deaf is something we were born with or affected by without the luxury of choice and we progressed through life by overcoming the obstacles placed by society. We have come to this place without choosing to do so.

I would like to ask the Committee to approve this bill with reservations in respect to inserting the appropriate language that enables us, the Hawaii Deaf community, to pursue Self-determination, Empowerment and Autonomy. I would like to ask this language to specify that only individuals who are Deaf have the right to make decisions, operation-wise and financial, in respect to the Comprehensive Deaf Center. I understand that any state-funded mandates require compliance with existing state laws and I believe many of us are qualified and smart enough to operate this on our own.

It is time to end the Deaf Apartheid in Hawaii. A good first step towards this would be to insert language that enables Self-determination, Empowerment and Autonomy which will allow us, the Deaf community here in Hawaii, to be in charge of our destiny rather than to be directed and controlled by existing gatekeepers who are not Deaf.

Sincerely,



Joshua R. Beal*, MBA
Managing Partner