

**SB 127**

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

Dear Chair Ige and members of the Ways and Means  
Committee,

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

Senator David Ige, Chair  
Committee on Ways and Means  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

February 25, 2011

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

Dear Suzanne Chun-Oakland and members of the Committee on Human Services,

My name is Cheryl Mizusawa and I am a private citizen and no longer employed at the Hawaii Centers for Independent Living. I am still unemployed and still involved with helping consumer's needs, member of Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland's Deaf and Blind Task Force.

My point of view that many deaf people from 16 years old to over 80 years old felt very comfortable with deaf staff. It will be a great benefit if Comprehensive Deaf Center to be establish. I ensured you that Deaf people will be very thrilling to have many wonderful opportunity to attend the workshop like skill of the Independent Living, empowerment, employment training, and many other things they really want to learn.

In my time way back to 1970s there was always struggled to get job, where to go because most non-profit organizations did not have any experience with the deaf consumers. They decided to use written communication with me. I told them that my language was not first English language. I would rather to have ASL interpreter but they do not have any fund for the interpreter to provide. I always turned around and sit and think all the disabilities with hearing people are very fortunate to receive the services. I couldn't get other service but only depend on the Vocational Rehabilitation (Deaf Services) that always provide me with employment training, job placement. I couldn't rejected some my deaf friends who need my help because they couldn't trust hearing people because hearing people couldn't explain them fully but give them brief summary. Last year, I was laid off from Hawaii Centers for Independent Living due to the financial. They put limit to provide the interpreters due to the fund. Most former consumers called me and ask for my help.

To enable people who are deaf to have a safe environment to socialize, obtain necessary services from agencies who sign and are familiar with deaf people and deaf culture, I am committed to developing that in a Comprehensive Deaf Center in Hawaii. The Center will allow deaf people to be as independent as possible by providing an environment where a number of services and social activities can be provided. Please allow this center to become a reality by appropriating start up funds to begin operations and establishment of services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,  
Cheryl Mizusawa

CHAIR of the SENATE WAYS & COMMITTEE

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

February 25, 2011

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

Dear Chair Ige and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Scott Cohen. I have a degree from Gallaudet University and I would like to contribute my skills I learned as a tenure student at Gallaudet, to the deaf community. The Center will provide me the opportunity to share and demonstrate my skill to my peers. The local peers will also be able to contribute their knowledge to the Center, creating mainstream network for the deaf community over the State of Hawaii. Myself, was born on Maui, flew to Oahu to learn the language of the deaf community at age 5, defined the consideration of late language development. The accessibility and accommodation create by the Center will be able to expand the service to serve the needs for the statewide deaf community. The establishment of the Comprehensive Deaf Center will provide the much-needed service to the deaf community in the State of Hawaii.

To enable people who are Deaf to have a safe environment to socialize, obtain necessary services from agencies with American Sign Language skill and are familiar with deaf people and deaf culture, I am committed to developing that in a Comprehensive Deaf Center in Hawaii. The Center will allow deaf people to be as individually as possible by providing an environment where a number of services and social activities can be provided. Please allow this center to become a reality by appropriating start up funds to begin operations and establishment of services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

*Scott Cohen*  
*Kula, Maui*