
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LANGUAGE ACCESS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that according to the
2 United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey of 2009-
3 2011, almost 329,827 of Hawaii's 1,361,628 people, or twenty-
4 four per cent of Hawaii's population, speak a language other
5 than English at home. This includes nearly 281,607 persons who
6 speak an Asian or Pacific Island language. According to the
7 same study, out of those who speak a language other than English
8 at home, 151,187, or forty-six per cent, are limited English
9 proficient. According to recent statistics from the non-profit
10 Immigration Policy Center, the research and policy arm of the
11 American Immigration Council, about eighteen per cent of
12 Hawaii's residents are foreign-born, and fourteen per cent of
13 Hawaii's children with immigrant parents are limited English
14 proficient.

15 The legislature therefore recognizes that English is not
16 the primary language for a significant proportion of Hawaii's
17 residents. These people have a limited ability to read, write,
18 speak, or understand English. Language barriers often prohibit



1 many residents from fully participating in the community.
2 Despite personal, family, community, and government efforts to
3 make those with limited English proficiency more self-sufficient
4 and productive, these efforts are often undermined by lack of
5 access to essential government and government-funded services
6 due to the language restrictions of Hawaii's limited English
7 proficient population.

8 The legislature recognized and acknowledged that language
9 is a barrier for those living in Hawaii who have identified
10 themselves as being limited English proficient. Consequently,
11 the legislature passed Act 290, Session Laws of Hawaii 2006, and
12 Act 201, Session Laws of Hawaii 2012, to ensure that limited
13 English proficient individuals have meaningful access to state-
14 provided and state-funded services in Hawaii. These laws
15 established the Hawaii office of language access to provide
16 oversight, central coordination, and technical assistance to
17 state and state-funded entities in their implementation of the
18 requirements of the language access law.

19 The language access law requires every state agency and any
20 organization that receives state funding and provides services
21 to the public to establish a language access plan on how they
22 will provide meaningful access to their agency's services,



1 including but not limited to social service programs, job
2 training and employment assistance programs, fair and impartial
3 administrative and other hearings, or emergency assistance.
4 These services are to be provided to all of Hawaii's diverse
5 population, regardless of what language they speak.

6 In an effort to comply with Act 290, Session Laws of Hawaii
7 2006, by the end of 2007, plans for twenty-six state departments
8 and agencies and more than sixty state-funded entities were
9 completed. During the subsequent implementation of these
10 language access plans, several major challenges were identified
11 as preventing the state and covered entities from providing
12 meaningful access in the form of interpretation and translation
13 services to limited English proficient individuals, thereby
14 limiting the ability of limited English proficient individuals:

- 15 (1) There is no comprehensive and centralized system or
16 structure in Hawaii to identify qualified language
17 interpreters and translators;
- 18 (2) Hawaii has a dearth of competent language interpreters
19 and translators available to assist limited English
20 proficient individuals. This is critical because a
21 key element to the successful implementation of the
22 language access plans is the availability of trained



1 and competent interpreters and translators so limited
2 English proficient individuals can receive competent,
3 timely, and meaningful language access assistance to
4 government and government-funded services; and

5 (3) Despite great technological advances, state agencies
6 do not have multilingual websites that can help
7 limited English proficient individuals access needed
8 information in their own language.

9 The creation of a statewide language access resource center
10 will address the first two needs. A study commissioned by the
11 legislature through Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 67, S.D. 1,
12 in 2008, which was undertaken by the office of language access,
13 concluded that support is needed for the establishment of a
14 language access resource center in Hawaii.

15 With a statewide language access resource center, Hawaii
16 will have a centralized resource that will meet the specific
17 needs of government agencies and state-funded entities to comply
18 with Hawaii's language access laws and benefit the general
19 public, including the limited English proficient population, and
20 non-profit and for-profit organizations.

21 The purpose of the language access resource center is to:



- 1 (1) Maintain a publicly available roster of language
2 interpreters and translators, listing any of their
3 qualifications and credentials;
- 4 (2) Train state and state-funded agencies on how to
5 effectively obtain and utilize the services of
6 language interpreters and translators;
- 7 (3) Support the recruitment and retention of language
8 interpreters and translators providing services to
9 state and state-funded agencies;
- 10 (4) Provide, coordinate, and publicize training
11 opportunities to increase the number and availability
12 of qualified interpreters and translators and further
13 develop their language interpretation and translation
14 skills; and
- 15 (5) Work toward identifying or creating a process to test
16 and certify language interpreters and translators and
17 promote use of the process to ensure the quality and
18 accuracy of their services.

19 The establishment of multilingual websites for all state
20 agencies may contribute greatly to the goal of providing limited
21 English proficient individuals the ability to electronically
22 access information about government services. This Act will



1 enable the office of language access to administer a pilot
2 project to test the utility and feasibility of this idea since
3 the office of language access is the state agency that is most
4 directly involved in the promotion of language access.

5 This Act also appropriates funds needed to establish the
6 language access resource center and the multilingual website
7 pilot project within the office of language access.

8 SECTION 2. (a) The office of language access, in
9 collaboration with other state agencies, shall implement a
10 multilingual website pilot project. The project shall:

11 (1) Explore the utility and feasibility of creating a
12 multilingual website to improve language access to
13 information provided online for limited English
14 proficient persons seeking information about
15 government and government-funded services in the
16 State; and

17 (2) To the extent feasible, produce a multilingual website
18 for use by the public for the twelve largest limited
19 English proficient population groups in the State.

20 (b) The multilingual website pilot project shall end on
21 June 30, 2016.



1 (c) The office of language access shall submit a report
2 detailing findings and recommendations, including proposed
3 legislation, regarding the pilot project to the legislature no
4 later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular
5 session of 2017.

6 SECTION 3. Section 321C-6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
7 amended to read as follows:

8 "[+]§321C-6[+] **Office of language access; established.**

9 [+a] There is established within the department of health, for
10 administrative purposes only, the office of language access.
11 The head of the office shall be known as the executive director
12 of the office of language access. The executive director shall
13 be appointed by the governor without regard to chapter 76. The
14 executive director shall:

15 (1) Provide oversight, central coordination, and technical
16 assistance to state agencies in their implementation
17 of language access requirements under this chapter or
18 under any other law, regulation, or guidance;

19 (2) Provide technical assistance to covered entities in
20 their implementation of this chapter;

21 (3) Review and monitor each state agency's language access
22 plan for compliance with this chapter;



- 1 (4) Where reasonable access is not provided, endeavor to
2 eliminate the barrier using informal methods such as
3 conference, conciliation, mediation, or persuasion.
4 Where the language access barrier cannot be eliminated
5 by informal methods, the executive director shall
6 submit a written report with the executive director's
7 opinion and recommendation to the state agency or the
8 covered entity. The executive director may request
9 the state agency or the covered entity to notify the
10 executive director, within a specified time, of any
11 action taken on the executive director's
12 recommendation;
- 13 (5) Consult with language access coordinators, the
14 language access advisory council, and state department
15 directors or their equivalent;
- 16 (6) Subject to section 321C-3, create, distribute to the
17 State, and make available to covered entities
18 multilingual signage in the more frequently
19 encountered languages in the State, and other
20 languages as needed, informing individuals of their
21 right to free oral language services and inviting them



1 to identify themselves as persons needing services;
2 [and]

3 (7) Adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to address the
4 language needs of limited English proficient
5 persons[-]; and

6 (8) Administer a statewide language access resource center
7 that will:

8 (A) Maintain a publicly available roster of language
9 interpreters and translators, listing any of
10 their qualifications and credentials;

11 (B) Train state and state-funded agencies on how to
12 effectively obtain and utilize the services of
13 language interpreters and translators;

14 (C) Support the recruitment and retention of language
15 interpreters and translators providing services
16 to state and state-funded agencies;

17 (D) Provide, coordinate, and publicize training
18 opportunities to increase the number and
19 availability of qualified interpreters and
20 translators and further develop their language
21 interpretation and translation skills; and



1 (E) Work toward identifying or creating a process to
 2 test and certify language interpreters and
 3 translators and promote use of the process to
 4 ensure the quality and accuracy of the language
 5 interpretation and translation services."

6 SECTION 4. The executive director of the office of
 7 language access shall have the authority to hire personnel
 8 necessary to staff the language access resource center and to
 9 administer its multilingual website. The staff, at the minimum,
 10 shall consist of one full-time project coordinator, three full-
 11 time program specialists, and one full-time clerk position. To
 12 the extent possible, the executive director shall hire bilingual
 13 personnel to staff the language access resource center and to
 14 administer its website.

15 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the general
 16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
 17 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2013-2014 and
 18 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
 19 year 2014-2015 to establish a statewide language access resource
 20 center within the office of language access to allow state
 21 agencies and covered entities to provide interpretation and

1 translation services to limited English proficient individuals
2 in accordance with Hawaii's language access laws.

3 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
4 of health for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 6. There is appropriated out of the general
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
7 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2013-2014 and
8 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
9 year 2014-2015 to establish a multilingual website pilot project
10 that aims to enable limited English proficient individuals to
11 get information about government services in their own language.

12 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
13 of health for the purposes of this Act.

14 SECTION 7. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
15 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

16 SECTION 8. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



Report Title:

Language Access Resource Center; Multilingual Website Pilot
Project; Appropriations

Description:

Establishes and provides appropriations for a statewide language access resource center and multilingual website pilot project to be administered by the office of language access. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

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