



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS  
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SERAFIN P. COLMENARES, JR.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To: Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair  
Rep. Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Health

From: Serafin Colmenares Jr.  
Executive Director, Office of Language Access

Date: January 24, 2014, 9 a.m.  
State Capitol, Room 329

Re: Testimony on H.B. 1748  
Relating to Language Access

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The Office of Language Access (“OLA”) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 1748 Relating to Language Access. My name is Serafin Colmenares, Jr. and I am the Executive Director of OLA. **OLA strongly supports H.B. 1748**, which would accomplish two things:

- (1) Provide financial assistance to talented interpreters seeking certification as a medical interpreter; and
- (2) Fund the development of medical glossaries in languages that are prominent in Hawaii, but for which no glossaries exist.

As to the first item, there are two national certifying agencies in medical interpreting; however, not one person in the State of Hawaii has either of these certifications. The expense to obtain certification is a major deterrent – costing between \$700 - \$800 per interpreter (not including the lost wages for the time that would be spent doing the required coursework.) This measure would remove this financial barrier by providing funds directly to the certifying agency on the recipient’s behalf. Not only will talented bilingual individuals interested in pursuing a career in medical interpreting have great incentive to overcome this hurdle. The state would also benefit because interpreter-recipients would be required to “give back” by providing uncompensated services to the state for a yet-to-be determined number of hours within two years of receiving certification. Most of all, we would expect to see much improved patient outcomes and fewer medical mishaps attributable to language barriers.

As to the second item, medical glossaries are immensely useful in the languages in which they’ve been developed because they are an authoritative source to settle any ambiguity of a communicated condition, body-part, or other medical term. However, no such glossaries exist in several languages that are prominent in Hawaii.

We respectfully request that your committee pass this measure with appropriations of \$100,000 in Section 2 to provide financial assistance to candidates for medical interpreter certifications; and \$50,000 in Section 3 for the development of medical glossaries in needed languages.

OLA appreciates this committee for its commitment to language access and for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

**morikawa2-Joanna**

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 23, 2014 2:19 PM  
**To:** HLTtestimony  
**Cc:** mendezj@hawaii.edu  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for HB1748 on Jan 24, 2014 09:00AM\*

**HB1748**

Submitted on: 1/23/2014

Testimony for HLT on Jan 24, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 329

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Javier Mendez-Alvarez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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