
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature recognizes and acknowledges
2 that language can be a barrier for limited English proficient
3 persons in accessing important benefits or services,
4 understanding and exercising important rights, complying with
5 applicable responsibilities, or understanding other information
6 provided by state-funded programs and activities. Act 290,
7 Session Laws of Hawaii 2006, as amended by Act 201, Session Laws
8 of Hawaii 2012, sought to ensure that limited English proficient
9 persons have meaningful access to state-provided and state-
10 funded services in Hawaii.

11 The office of language access provides oversight, central
12 coordination, and technical assistance to twenty-six state
13 agencies and approximately one hundred fifty state-funded
14 agencies in implementing the requirements of Hawaii's language
15 access law.

16 The technical assistance provided to agencies by the office
17 of language access include needs assessments, assistance with
18 language access plans, training of agency staff, work with



1 interpreters and translators, data collection, reporting, and
2 more. The office of language access conducts periodic
3 compliance monitoring, provides complaint resolution, and
4 reports annually to the governor and the legislature.

5 Due to the State's reduction-in-force in 2009, the office
6 of language access's staff of six was eliminated, leaving only
7 the executive director position. Although two of the six
8 positions were restored in 2013, critical staff positions remain
9 unfilled.

10 Furthermore, Act 217, Session Laws of Hawaii 2013, also
11 created the statewide language access resource center within the
12 office of language access. The delay and timing of the
13 executive branch's release of funds to staff the resource center
14 made it impossible to fill the positions established by that
15 Act. The objectives of the statewide language access resource
16 center are laudable but require significant time and resources
17 for planning, coordination, and management. The existing office
18 of language access staff expended great efforts and resources to
19 get the statewide language access resource center off the ground
20 -- work that was envisioned to be the responsibility of new
21 center staff who have yet to be hired.



1 As a result, the office of language access has not been
2 able to fully perform its original statutorily-mandated
3 compliance and technical assistance functions. Accordingly,
4 many state agencies have been unable to implement important
5 aspects of their language access plans because of lack of
6 oversight and technical assistance, and many limited English
7 proficient individuals in Hawaii continue to lack meaningful
8 access to government services, programs, and activities.

9 The purpose of this Act is to establish full-
10 time equivalent permanent positions within the office of
11 language access, as originally specified in the office's
12 implementing legislation, to assist state agencies and state-
13 funded agencies in implementing the requirements of Hawaii's
14 language access law.

15 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
16 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
17 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2016-2017 for
18 full-time equivalent (FTE) permanent
19 positions within the office of language access to assist state
20 agencies and state-funded agencies in implementing the



1 requirements of Hawaii's language access law. Of these three
2 positions:

3 (1) \$ shall be for full-time equivalent

4 (FTE) permanent researcher positions; and

5 (2) \$ shall be for full-time equivalent

6 (FTE) permanent office assistant position.

7 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
8 health for the purposes of this Act.

9 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on January 7, 2059.



Report Title:

Office of Language Access; Employee Positions; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds for an unspecified number of full-time equivalent permanent positions within the Office of Language Access. Effective January 7, 2059. (SD1)

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