



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

919 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 101 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V/TDD) • Fax (808) 586-8129

February 25, 2016

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

House Bill 2554, HD1 – Relating to American Sign Language

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 2554, HD1 – Relating to American Sign Language. The purpose of this bill is to establish and designate American Sign Language (ASL) as a language distinct from English and Hawaiian.

This bill establishes and designates ASL as a designated language distinct from English and Hawaiian, which are official languages in the state, but goes no further. A similar measure Senate Bill 2981 - Relating to Education was introduced in the Senate. Senate Bill 2981 recognizes ASL as a foreign language and allows public schools to offer ASL as a foreign language and add it to school curricula. A student may then take and pass courses in ASL and receive credit for those courses that will then satisfy foreign language requirements for graduation.

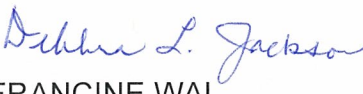
Including ASL as a language distinct from English and Hawaiian as well as Deaf culture will expand cultural understanding in Hawaii, and enrich the educational experience of Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing students in Hawaii public schools. Being able to learn ASL may also assist to increase the number of ASL/English interpreters available in Hawaii and enhance the identities of Deaf and hard of hearing students who use ASL on a daily basis.

We request your consideration to amend the bill to mirror the language in Senate Bill 2981.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,


BARBARA FISCHLOWITZ-LEONG
Chairperson
Legislative Committee


for FRANCINE WAI
Executive Director

From: Dale London <dalep@hawaii.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 7:28 AM
To: FINTestimony; Rep. Sylvia Luke
Subject: HB 2554

February 23, 2016
House Bill 2554 TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Dale London. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. This beautiful language serves the purpose of communication without a written element. ASL is very useful too as it can be used by anyone, under water, on a hike, in a busy crowded room. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities. Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development. Kapi'olani Community College has an amazing program with a full set of ASL courses and Deaf Culture courses.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Also this would help promote interpreting programs and other programs for the Deaf Community. We need more local interpreters and promoters of ASL. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Dale London
Waimanalo, HI

[Click for ASL Video on HB2554](https://youtu.be/w4FKnaZGyX4)
<https://youtu.be/w4FKnaZGyX4>

Dale London

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To every man is given the key to the gates of heaven; the same key opens the gates of hell. -Proverb

From: Pinky Juggler <pinkyjuggler@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2016 10:50 PM
To: Rep. Sylvia Luke; FINTestimony
Cc: Pinky Aiello
Subject: HB 2554 HD1

February 23, 2016

House Bill 2554 TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Pinky Aiello. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,

Pinky Aiello

From: Alex Low <bugalexander@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2016 10:44 PM
To: Rep. Sylvia Luke; FINTestimony
Subject: HB 2554 HD1

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Alexander Low. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,

Alexander Low
Mililani, HI

From: Eric and Dina Dela Pena <dpdeafevents@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 5:17 AM
To: FINTestimony
Subject: HB 2554 TESTIMONY

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is (Dina Dela Pena). I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign L language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
(Dina Dela Pena)
(Waipahu, HI)

From: Austin <beachxisland@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 8:24 AM
To: FINTestimony; Rep. Sylvia Luke
Subject: House Bill 2554 TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Austin Darner. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities. Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Austin Darner
Honolulu, HI

February 24, 2016

House Bill 2554 TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Christine Holmes. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities. Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,

Christine Holmes

Christine Holmes
Honolulu, Hawaii

February 22, 2016

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Scott Mosley. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Scott Mosley
Chicago, IL

From: Kammi Koza <kalei7796782@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 8:14 AM
To: FINTestimony
Subject: Testimony on American Sign Language Bill

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Kammi Koza. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities. Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Kammi Koza
Pearl City, HI

From: Hercules GK <hercgosskuehn@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2016 10:46 PM
To: FINTestimony

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Hercules GK. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Hercules
Makakilo, HI

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2016 10:01 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: heather.interpreter@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB2554 on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM

HB2554

Submitted on: 2/23/2016

Testimony for FIN on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Heather Benjamin	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aloha, I am a professional sign language interpreter since 2001 and have been studying and using American Sign Language since I was 12 years old. I love this language, culture, and the Deaf community. Like all languages, I believe they need to be shared and taught to those who wish to learn them. Knowing another language gives you a window into another world, with its own set of values, beliefs, and ways of thinking and being that you would never know unless you knew their language. I support this bill HB2554. Mahalo, Heather Benjamin

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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February 24, 2016
TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Marisa Bolivar and I have been working in the Deaf Education field for over ten years. I wholeheartedly support HB 2554 HD1, and provide this testimony on behalf of the bill.

American Sign Language (ASL) is a complex and complete language that utilizes the hands, arms, body, and face to communicate abstract concepts and ideas, as well as basic human needs. ASL is the primary language of approximately 500,000 people in the United States, and yet, ASL is still not recognized as a foreign language in many states. In this case, we are not making the case that foreign mean geographically separate, but rather, unfamiliar or different from another. A non-ASL user would not be able to comprehend meaning from someone using the language, and would feel foreign in a group of ASL users. Less than 200,000 people use the Navajo language as their primary language, and yet it is not in question whether or not Navajo is a distinct language. American Sign Language is similar to English the same way that English is similar to Latin. No one would confuse Latin for English, or English for ASL, but only one of these languages is not recognized as distinctly its own.

One of the worst things that someone could be told is that their language, the way in which they communicate, react, and respond to the world around them, is not valid. We have reached a time in which recognizing the distinction between ASL and English is not only scientifically and linguistically proven, but the right thing to do in order to recognize ASL and its impact and significance in our widespread culture. The Deaf Community deserves to be recognized as using a language that is on equal footing with English and Hawaiian.

ASL is the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities. Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development. HB 2554 HD1 aims to appropriately grant American Sign Language its rightful place next to English and Hawaiian as its own distinct language. In 2015 Hawaiian Creole English was recognized as a language with the US Census Bureau, and Hawaii continues to be progressive in recognizing and championing smaller language groups. We can continue this forward thinking with HB 2554 HD1.

Please vote in favor of HB 2554 HD1. This action would benefit Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing people alike. Its empowerment would help to continue to move our diverse community in the right direction, toward equal inclusion for all people.

Sincerely,



Marisa Bolivar
Pearl City, Hawaii

From: Bernie Hamada <berniehamada@hawaii.rr.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 3:02 PM
To: FINTestimony
Subject: In support of HB 2554 HD1

February 23, 2016
House Bill 2554 TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Bernie Hamada. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Bernie Hamada
Honolulu, Hawaii

From: Galinda Goss-Kuehn <galindagoss@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 3:11 PM
To: FINTestimony
Subject: House Bill 2554 TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke

Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is (insert your name). I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Galinda K. Goss-Kuehn

Makakilo, Hawaii

February 24, 2016

Testimony by Billy Kekua, President

Aloha State Association of the Deaf

www.deafaloha.org

Support for HB2554 Relating to American Sign Language
American Sign Language; Official Foreign Language of the State

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair

Rep. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

Dear Chair Rhoads and committee members,

The majority of our membership heavily use the American Sign Language (ASL) as the way of life to communicate with family, friends, and everyone in the society. Often times we depend on interpreters to facilitate the communication in many areas such as workplaces, appointments, entertainment/events, and others. Thus, we feel that ASL should be included in the curriculum to satisfy the foreign language requirement.

It will be a great opportunity for all students (I mean all - hearing, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and everyone) should benefit from learning ASL. There are plethora of job opportunities can be a life-saving experience for everyone if they can communicate in ASL with DHHDB consumers. Interpreters, doctors, teachers, business owners, and many... The healthy society should be like this - everyone can enjoy their beautiful lives in ease and peace.

With the reasons presented in this letter, we respectfully request that the bill is to be passed. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to present our testimony with you.

Malama pono.

Aloha, my name is Nikki Kepoo and I am a mother of a trilingual daughter (English, Hawaiian, and ASL), and a deaf son (ASL). My testimony is based upon personal experience and knowledge. I completely support HB2554 that ASL should be recognized and accredited as a foreign language.

In all foreign language there are distinct markers unique to those languages. Although many share similarities, French is not to be confused with Italian, Spanish is not to be confused to Portuguese, Hawaiian is not to be confused with English, so on and so forth. With that being said, the deaf culture and language is unique in its communication, sentence structure, and words. Although there are some similarities in the visual language, it can be established as unique because its structure does NOT follow an English structure. It is VERY similar to the Hawaiian language where certain words/signs are unique to the context of the information being relayed. Likewise, the structure of the sentence is similar to languages such as Hawaiian, French, Spanish, Italian.

In ASL, you not only have unique signs that have to match the purpose/meaning of what you are saying, but the structure is also different from that of spoken English. American Sign Language is NOT English being done through hands, it IS its own language. There are many factors, such as, facial expressions, hand placement, meaning of that motion, and structure of your sentence.

It is critical for the students and for those in the hearing community to realize that difference and see the value of learning the language. It can only enhance our growth as a state, not diminish it.

In the State of Hawaii where we have many diverse cultures, we can see how obtaining degrees/credits in languages such as Japanese, Spanish, French, or even now in Chinese or Korea can assist in the overall tourism industry. The deaf community worldwide makes up approximately 11,000 of those visitors to Hawaii. There are millions of deaf individuals who would support AND experience Hawaii if this language is elevated as we have done in the past with our Hawaiian Language and those like Japanese.

Therefore, I am in full support of this bill and recommend that the Legislature recognize the economic benefits of adding this unique language to the continued positive movement of our State.

From: Laura Safranski <lauraterp@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 6:08 PM
To: FINTestimony; Rep. Sylvia Luke
Subject: House Bill 2554 TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

February 23, 2016

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813



Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Laura Safranski. I strongly support HB 2554 HD.

American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities. Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development yet taken away from the Deaf...

People of Hawaii would benefit in their careers, educationally and socially. All are direct benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language. That community consists of Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf-Blind and hearing citizens as well.

Sincerely,

Laura Safranski

Waimanalo, HI

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 7:57 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: echiwa@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB2554 on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM*



HB2554

Submitted on: 2/24/2016

Testimony for FIN on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Eileen Chiwa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 4:52 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: canthecant@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB2554 on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM*



HB2554

Submitted on: 2/24/2016

Testimony for FIN on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kaimi Seminara	Hawaii Deaf Surfriders Association	Support	No

Comments:

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 4:50 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: canthecant@gmail.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB2554 on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM*



HB2554

Submitted on: 2/24/2016

Testimony for FIN on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Darlene Ewan	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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Phone: 808-445-9125



info@isleinterpret.com



TESTIMONY TO SUPPORT HB 2554

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke:

Our agency, Isle Interpret, LLC of Honolulu, HI, is a scheduling agency for sign language interpreters. Sign language interpreters provide an important communication bridge between deaf and hearing persons. Isle Interpret supports to HB 2554.

There is a nationwide shortage of qualified sign language interpreters. Interpreters most often begin their exposure and training in sign language in academic classrooms. Having sign language recognized as a distinct language would help increase the pool of candidates who could take classes and possibly follow a career path to becoming an interpreter.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Please support HB 2554

With warm regard,
Isle Interpret, LLC
PO Box 1380
Kaneohe, HI 96744

Tamar Lani, President
Susan Kroe-Unabia, Vice President

February 23, 2016

House Bill 2554 TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813



Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Gail Odagiri. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Gail Odagiri
Aiea, Hawaii

February 23, 2016

House Bill 2554 TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813



Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Kurstin Chun. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens.

Sincerely,
Kurstin Chun
Aiea, Hawaii

LATE

February 24, 2016

Testimony by Billy Kekua, President

Aloha State Association of the Deaf

www.deafaloha.org

Support for HB2554 Relating to American Sign Language
American Sign Language; Official Foreign Language of the State

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke

Dear Chair Luke,

The majority of our membership heavily use the American Sign Language (ASL) as the way of life to communicate with family, friends, and everyone in the society. Often times we depend on interpreters to facilitate the communication in many areas such as workplaces, appointments, entertainment/events, and others. Thus, we feel that ASL should be included in the curriculum to satisfy the foreign language requirement.

It will be a great opportunity for all students (I mean all - hearing, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and everyone) should benefit from learning ASL. There are plethora of job opportunities can be a life-saving experience for everyone if they can communicate in ASL with DHHDB consumers. Interpreters, doctors, teachers, business owners, and many... The healthy society should be like this - everyone can enjoy their beautiful lives in ease and peace.

With the reasons presented in this letter, we respectfully request that the bill is to be passed. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to present our testimony with you.

Malama pono.

LATE

JAN L. FRIED • American Sign Language/English Interpreter

• RID Certified-IC, CI, CT • Educator • Consultant •

24 February 16

Twenty-eighth Legislature of the State of Hawai'i, 2016

To: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Nishimoto, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

Fr.: Jan Fried

Re: Support for HB 2554, HD1, Relating to American Sign Language (Hearing on HB 2554, HD1; 25 February 2016; 3:00pm, Conference Room 308)

Aloha. I write this testimony in support of HB 2554, HD1 from the perspective of being a longtime ally of the Deaf Community, a professional American Sign Language/English interpreter, the president of the Hawai'i Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, an interpreter educator who prepares college students to become American Sign Language/English interpreters, and an American Sign Language instructor. I am well aware of how important it is for American Sign Language (ASL) to be formally recognized by the State as an established and designated language distinct from the State's official languages.

Formal recognition of ASL has several benefits. It promotes awareness that ASL is a complete and linguistically complex language—K-12 institutions may be more willing to include ASL in their World Languages offerings if it receives this designation. Deaf and hearing children would then have the opportunity to study ASL no matter where they went to school. HB 2554, HD1 could even be seen as a companion to another bill, HB 1780 that was also introduced this session because early language acquisition is critical for all children. HB 1780 asks the state to make a plan to ensure Deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-Blind children are language ready by the time they enter kindergarten. Recognizing ASL could make this initiative easier and result in ASL becoming more readily available to very young children and allow them broader access to it throughout their entire educational experience. Deaf people are not the only ones who use ASL. Children who can hear benefit from being exposed to ASL as are children with cognitive and other disabilities. ASL provides another language option for communication, a window into another culture and possible career paths.

My thanks to the house Committee on the Judiciary for drafting changes to the initial version of the Bill and removing references to ASL as a "foreign" language and the request for official recognition. ASL is a non-English language that is used and valued by numerous Deaf, hard of hearing, and Deaf-Blind Americans, and their non-Deaf families, colleagues and friends. In high schools, colleges and universities throughout the United States, ASL is extremely popular and countless reports list it as the 3rd or 4th most studied language. ASL is the "power" sign language in the world (as English is the "power" spoken language internationally) and is often the second sign language Deaf people in other countries learn after mastering their own indigenous or national sign language—to them ASL is indeed a "foreign" language. In 1995, the University of Hawai'i system recognized ASL as one of the languages that satisfies the Second/Foreign Language requirement for graduation. It has since changed that graduation designation to "American Sign/Hawaiian/Foreign Language" to ensure that both the Hawaiian language, as one of the State's official languages, and American Sign Language, a sign language unique to the US, are valued and worthy of study as other languages, but are not *foreign*.

I urge your committee to support this bill. *Mahalo.*

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2016 10:35 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: lisa2tom@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB2554 on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM

LATE

HB2554

Submitted on: 2/24/2016

Testimony for FIN on Feb 25, 2016 15:00PM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Lisa Tom	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Dear Chair Luke, My name is LisaAnn Tom. I support HB 2554 HD1. American Sign Language is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. The bill would provide that American Sign Language can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English. It's the fourth most popular world language course offered at today's universities . Middle schools and high schools across the nation are offering ASL classes. Offering ASL classes to kindergarten and elementary students would benefit greatly. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development. People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language. Please vote yes to honor the community that uses this language, both Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing citizens. Sincerely, LisaAnn Honolulu, Hawaii

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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From: alohakat74 <alohakat74@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2016 2:58 PM
To: FINTestimony; Rep. Sylvia Luke
Subject: SUPPORT HB 2554

February 25, 2016

HOUSE BILL 2554

TESTIMONY TO THE REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Representative Sylvia Luke
Chair of Finance
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 306
415 South Berentania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Luke,

My name is Kathy Thomas. I support HB 2554 HD1. ASL (American Sign Language) is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body., The bill would provide ASL can be recognized as a language distinct from Hawaiian and English.

It's the 4th most popular world language course offered at today's universities, Middle schools and high schools across the USA are offering ASL classes. It is being taught to babies that are hearing to promote early language development.

People of Hawaii would benefit from career, educational and social benefits of learning ASL as a foreign / world language,

Please VOTE YES to honor the community that uses this language ASL, both Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing citizens.

Sincerely,

Kathy Thomas
Kaneohe, HI