
HOUSE RESOLUTION

CONVENING THE MULTIPLE LANGUAGES EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION WORKING
GROUP.

1 WHEREAS, as one of the most culturally diverse states in
2 the nation, Hawaii has one of the highest proportions of non-
3 English speakers in the United States; and
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5 WHEREAS, about one in four Hawaii residents speak a
6 language other than English at home, and about one in eight
7 Hawaii residents speak English "less than very well", giving
8 Hawaii one of the highest rates of persons with limited English
9 proficiency, per capita, in the United States; and
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11 WHEREAS, a significant percentage of visitors to Hawaii
12 have a primary language other than English; and
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14 WHEREAS, residents and visitors who lack proficiency in
15 English are at great risk in emergency situations in which they
16 are unable to understand written or verbal warnings or
17 notifications, including warnings or notifications about
18 dangerous conditions, impending severe weather, and appropriate
19 emergency responses; and
20

21 WHEREAS, preparing for and responding to emergencies is
22 especially important, but sometimes very difficult, for
23 residents and visitors of limited English proficiency; and
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25 WHEREAS, residents of and visitors to Hawaii with limited
26 English proficiency have expressed concerns regarding access to
27 and comprehension of emergency notifications; and
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29 WHEREAS, bridging the communication gap is essential to
30 ensuring equal access for all community members, especially in
31 emergency situations; and



1 WHEREAS, providing language access in disaster and
2 emergency management is critical to ensure that all of the
3 State's residents and visitors, regardless of English
4 proficiency, can access essential resources like shelters,
5 medicine, social services, and other disaster relief; and
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7 WHEREAS, effective and appropriate communication that
8 reaches all who may be impacted by a disaster or emergency event
9 is critical to protecting lives, families, and communities; and
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11 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency coordinates
12 emergency notifications and response to disasters; and
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14 WHEREAS, the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency's planning
15 should include a means for residents and visitors of limited
16 English proficiency to receive important emergency
17 notifications; and
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19 WHEREAS, the convening of a working group of stakeholders
20 is a significant step toward sharing information, developing
21 ideas, and taking action to ensure meaningful access for
22 Hawaii's residents and visitors with limited English proficiency
23 through the provision of emergency notifications in multiple
24 languages; now, therefore,
25

26 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
27 Thirtieth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of
28 2019, that a Multiple Languages Emergency Notification Working
29 Group be convened to develop a plan to provide emergency
30 notifications in multiple languages; and
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32 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Multiple Languages
33 Emergency Notification Working Group is requested to develop a
34 plan to provide emergency notifications in multiple languages
35 for people with limited English proficiency, including:
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- 37 (1) Determining the scope of implementing emergency
38 notifications in multiple languages, including the
39 specific languages needed and the method or methods by
40 which the notifications should be provided;



- 1 (2) Developing a process to ensure that emergency
2 notifications in languages other than English are
3 accurate, culturally appropriate, meaningful, and
4 timely; and
5
6 (3) Identifying any necessary resources to effectuate the
7 purpose of this measure, such as the cost of services,
8 necessary information technology software, or foreign
9 language translators who can provide timely
10 translation services during disasters; and
11

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Multiple Languages
13 Emergency Notification Working Group is requested to comprise
14 the following members or their designees:
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- 16 (1) Director of the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, or
17 the Director's designee, who shall serve as chair of
18 the working group;
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20 (2) Director of Health;
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22 (3) Director of Human Services;
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24 (4) Chairperson of the Board of Education;
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26 (5) Director of Business, Economic Development, and
27 Tourism;
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29 (6) Chair of the University of Hawaii Board of Regents;
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31 (7) Executive Director of the Office of Language Access;
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33 (8) Executive Director of the Disability and Communication
34 Access Board;
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36 (9) Program Director of the Office on Equality and Access
37 to the Courts;
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39 (10) Emergency Management Officer of the Maui Civil Defense
40 Agency;



1 (11) Deputy Director of the County of Hawaii Civil Defense
2 Agency;

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4 (12) Director of Emergency Management of the City and
5 County of Honolulu; and

6
7 (13) Administrator of the Kauai Civil Defense Agency; and
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9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the chair of the working group
10 invite representatives from the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism
11 Association, Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities,
12 and the Inter-Agency Council for Refugee and Immigrant Services
13 to serve as members; and
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15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Multiple Languages Emergency
16 Notification Working Group is requested to submit to the
17 Legislature a report of its findings and recommendations,
18 including any proposed legislation, no later than twenty days
19 prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2020; and
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21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
22 Resolution be transmitted to the Director of the Hawaii
23 Emergency Management Agency; Director of Health; Director of
24 Human Services; Chairperson of the Board of Education; Director
25 of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism; Chair of the
26 University of Hawaii Board of Regents; Executive Director of the
27 Office of Language Access; Executive Director of the Disability
28 and Communication Access Board; Program Director of the Office
29 on Equality and Access to the Courts; Emergency Management
30 Officer of the Maui Civil Defense Agency; Deputy Director of the
31 County of Hawaii Civil Defense Agency; Director of Emergency
32 Management of the City and County of Honolulu; Administrator of
33 the Kauai Civil Defense Agency; President and Chief Executive
34 Officer of the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association;
35 Chairperson of the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental
36 Disabilities; and Chairperson of the Inter-Agency Council for
37 Refugee and Immigrant Services.

