



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129 • TTY (808) 586-8162

March 20, 2019

**LATE**

### TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, VETERANS, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

House Resolution 105 and House Concurrent Resolution 113 – Convening the Multiple  
Languages Emergency Notification Working Group.


The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) offers comments on House Resolution 105 and House Concurrent Resolution 113 – Convening the Multiple Languages Emergency Notification Working Group. These resolutions focus on establishing a working group to develop emergency notifications about disasters to effectively notify all members in the community of an impending emergency. This is targeted primarily for people with limited English proficiency; however, there are people with disabilities who are deaf whose first language is American Sign Language, not English. It also impacts people with cognitive disabilities and traumatic brain injuries who understand plain language more clearly. Our comments address the needs of the population of people with disabilities.

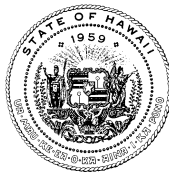
Our office is named as one of the members of the working group to ensure that information is disseminated to the public in clear, understandable, and plain language. We are willing to serve as a member of this working group, and strongly urge you to consider including representatives from the State Council on Developmental Disabilities as well as individuals with disabilities themselves. People with disabilities can provide insights to what their real-life needs are, while individuals without disabilities from state and county agencies do not have those personal insights. If needed, our office would be glad to assist in identifying individuals with disabilities who would be appropriate members to serve on this working group.

We encourage you to include people with disabilities on the working group, not only government representatives. There should not be any planning for people with disabilities without them being part of the process from the onset.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on these measures.

Respectfully submitted,

*for*   
FRANCINE WAI  
Executive Director



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
**OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**  
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 322  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

March 19, 2019

To: The Honorable Representative Gregg Takayama, Chair  
The Honorable Representative Cedric Asuega Gates, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Public Safety, Veterans, & Military Affairs

From: Aphirak Bamrungruan, Executive Director

Subject: **HCR 113/ HR 105** – Requesting the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to convene the multiple languages emergency notification working group.

Hearing: Wednesday, March 20, 2019, 11:00 AM  
Conference Room 430, State Capitol

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**Agency's Position:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) supports the intent of the House Concurrent Resolution 113/ House Resolution 105.

**Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of these resolutions is to request the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to convene the multiple languages emergency notification working group.

The agency notes that the aspirational and exploratory goal of both resolutions are in line with the mission of OLA which is to address the language access needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons and ensure their meaningful access to services, programs, and activities offered by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government, including departments, offices, commissions, boards, and other state-funded agencies.

The lack of English proficiency has strong impacts on people's economic and social activities, safety, health literacy and wellness, access to education, employment, and important public assistance, benefits, programs and services. Languages barriers are known to be an important contributor to the ineffectiveness of emergency information dissemination and related problems, especially in multicultural communities.

As the recent events demonstrate, disaster/emergency can strike our state anywhere, anytime, and often without warning. With so many of Hawaii's residents and visitors speaking a language other than English at home, it is critical that all our communities have access to service and information to help them prepare for and respond to emergencies.

The establishment of a working group is an important step toward information-sharing and the development of ideas and action steps to address the language needs during emergency events.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on these resolutions.



11am Wednesday, March 20, 2019  
Testimony in support of HR 105/ HCR113  
Submitted by: Amy Agbayani, co-chair  
3432 B-1 Kalihi St.  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96819

Chair Takayama, Vice Chair Gates and members of the Committee

Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights (HF CR) strongly supports HR105/HCR 113 convening the multiple languages emergency notification working group. HF CR supports these resolutions because it is consistent with mandates and goals for equal access and inclusion of all persons in our state. Clearly individuals, both residents and visitors need to have equal access to communications particularly as it pertains to emergencies. The information on speakers of other languages who have limited English language abilities described in the resolution and other safety issues gives adequate and important reasons to convene this working group.

I respectfully request that a community agency representative who works with foreign-born immigrants and has experience working with the limited English speakers also be invited to be a member (similar to the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association representative). I request two amendments to HR105/HCR 113. Please add one additional member to the working group:

insert on page 4 line 12 : "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the chair of the working group invite a representative from the Inter-Agency Council for Refugee and Immigrant Services to serve as a member; and"

insert in the last paragraph on page 4, line 33:

"the chair of the Inter-Agency Council for Refugee and Immigrant Services."