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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

P. O. Box 339
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March 27, 2021

TO: The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senate Committee on Education

The Honorable Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SCR 6/SR 6** – URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM TO RECRUIT AND EMPLOY QUALIFIED BLIND PERSONS TO SERVE AS ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY INSTRUCTORS AND IN OTHER POSITIONS AS TEACHERS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS.

Hearing: March 29, 2021, 3:30 p.m.
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of the proposed resolutions as it provides expanded educational and employment opportunities for individuals with visual impairments.

We defer to the Department of Education on the impact this proposal may have on its services.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the resolution is to encourage the Department of Education (DOE) to develop and implement a program designed to recruit and employ qualified blind professionals to serve as orientation and mobility instructors, and in other positions as teachers of visually impaired students.

Ho`opono Services for the Blind, a branch of the DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), offers a nationally accredited adult residential blindness skills training

program which is staffed by a team of professionals, many of whom are blind themselves. DVR's orientation and mobility instructors, and other instructors who are blind, have contributed in great part to the success of adult students who have completed training for independent living. DVR's staff, certified by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB), are highly effective teachers and role models for DOE co-enrolled transition-age high school students, and adult participants in the Ho`opono Services for the Blind, New Visions Program.

Ho`opono Services for the Blind has received calls from parents of DOE students who are blind and visually impaired inquiring about the possibility of their children being provided blindness skills training from DVR's NBPCB-certified instructors. However, these students remain under the jurisdiction of the DOE.

Ho`opono Services for the Blind has programs in place to train and successfully place individuals who are blind and visually impaired in competitive, integrated employment nationwide as NBPCB certified instructors in areas such as orientation and mobility, home management, Braille, and other areas of rehabilitation teaching for the blind. DHS welcomes opportunities to collaborate with the DOE, especially the opportunity to provide qualified applicants for DOE positions.

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

SCR-6

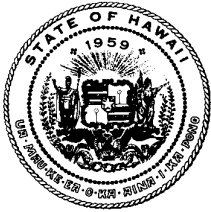
Submitted on: 3/28/2021 1:27:50 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/29/2021 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shellford Cantan	Testifying for National Federation of the blind Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

I support SR6 and SCR6



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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March 29, 2021

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senate Concurrent Resolution 6/Senate Resolution 6 – Urging the Department of Education to Develop and Implement a Program to Recruit and Employ Qualified Blind Persons to Serve as Orientation and Mobility Instructors and in Other Positions as Teachers of Visually Impaired Students

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports Senate Concurrent Resolution 6/Senate Resolution 6, which urges the Department of Education (DOE) to develop and implement a program to recruit and employ qualified blind persons to serve as orientation and mobility instructors and in other positions as teachers of visually impaired students.

At the heart of this measure is the need for instructors who possess the National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC) to teach students who are visually impaired under the DOE. The NOMC includes training in teaching Structured Discovery Cane Travel, where methods and principles come from decades of lived experiences, attitudes, and techniques of blind individuals. Ho'opono Services for the Blind considers hiring individuals with the NOMC as a best practice.

Another recognized training method, the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) certification, provides a vision-centered approach to orientation and mobility services and emphasizes instructors who are sighted. This contrasts with the NOMC's Structured Discovery approach and emphasis on employing blind instructors.

Up until recently, only the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) certification was accepted by the DOE. This has resulted in the DOE having the personnel resources to provide vision-centered orientation and mobility services, but not the Structured Discovery approach. Students who are blind or vision impaired and their families should have all options available to them. Additionally, this has diminished employment opportunities for qualified blind persons. The Hawaii Teacher Standards Board now accepts the NOMC, but despite this change, there has not been an increased reliance on blind instructors with the NOMC and the DOE currently has no employees with such certification.

We strongly urge passage of this measure.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

Virgil Stinnett
Testimony before the Hawaii State Senate
Committees on Education EDU and Human Services (HMS)
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2021
March 29, 2021, 3:30 PM, hearing on SCR6 and SR6

Good Afternoon. Chairman, vice chair, and committee members. My name is Virgil Stinnett, a blind entrepreneur, a leader and member of The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, residing at 2943 Kalakaua Avenue in Honolulu. I am in strong support of SCR6 and SR6 affirming the Hawaii Department of Education hiring blind teachers NOMC certified. I am in support of the testimony submitted by the NFB of Hawaii.

For over 20 years, I have participated in the mentoring of our blind youth, using NOMC structured discovery methods and at one time was a certified NOMC travel instructor actively working teaching orientation and mobility in Hawaii.

I am personally a graduate of the NOMC instruction methods when I became blind as an adult 24 years ago. I was a student of a certified NOMC training center.

The first 10 years of my life as a blind working adult, were a daily challenge and I had very limited confidence, without the non-visual techniques used in MOMC methods. Today I run a large DOD contract and have over 90 employees I manage serving our military. Without the tools and confidence I learned from the NOMC training center, and mentoring by blind certified adults, I would not be able to contribute to my community or travel around the world with my blind wife, independently and safely.

Mahalo for seriously considering our blind children's lives and their need for excellent blindness skills training offered with certified blind instructors, NOMC certification by passing SCR6 and SR6

Katie Keim

Testimony Before The Committees on Education(EDU) and Human Services (HMS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2021

March 29, 2021, 3:30 PM, hearing on SCR6, SR6

Good afternoon committee chairs, vice chairs, and members. My name is Katie Keim, a blind business woman residing in Honolulu, and a member of The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii. I strongly support SCR 7, SR 5 and the position of The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii.

The inaccessibility of government documents that I cannot fully access or not at all is a daily challenge during my work, civil community advocacy and care and maintenance of my health. The resolution clearly addresses the issue I and other blind individuals deal with attempting to access vital state agency information and I ask you for your full support on this resolution.

7 years ago I worked as a public servant in 1 of our state agencies. The job application was not accessible to me even using my alternative technology. It required I seek assistance from a sighted individual. Although during my public service, I had access to a shared administrative assistant, I spent at least three times as long completing many of the forms required in my professional capacity or adding an extra load to my assistant who served 4 other professionals who did not have the barrier to access the documents i did.

Today as a business woman in the private sector, government documents are still a requirement to do business in Hawaii and most of them are not accessible for me using alternative technology. Again, although I have an office manager and bookkeeper I hire, it is added cost to my business to have them fill out forms that I should be able to do if the forms were fully accessible to the blind.

With the COVID pandemic, we run into scheduling barriers for tests and vaccinations putting us at risk with no alternatives to set our appointments that we should be able to easily do with our alternative technology.

Mahalo for your consideration of this resolution and my testimony in support.

Brandon G. Young

31st Session of the State Legislature of the State of Hawaii

Senate Committee on Education and Human Services

Testimony for SR 6 and SCR 6

Hearing on Monday, March 29, 2021 at 3:30 P.M.

March 27, 2021

Dear Chairs and Vice-Chairs,

My name is Brandon Young, and I am a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii. I am submitting testimony in support of this joint resolution that is before your committees today. This resolution is important to me and the blind of Hawaii. We are in favor of urging the Department of Education to hire employees who are blind and are certified to teach in the field of Orientation and Mobility. These blind people hold the National Orientation and Mobility Certification from the National Blindness and Professional Certification Board (NBPCB) which is directed under the leadership of Dr. Edward C. Bell at the Louisiana Tech University. These professionals are highly skilled and are qualified to work in the Department of Education. However, the Department of Education continues to hire those who are blind to teach in the field of Orientation of Mobility. The Department of Education still refuses to employ blind people. The Department of Education promotes the model that has promulgated by the Association of Education and Rehabilitation Professionals for the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER). This model believes that you must have physical vision in order to teach in the field of orientation and mobility. They believe that you must use your vision to monitor the student to protect them from any type of oncoming danger. There is no discovery under this method.

The point of this resolution is to urge the hiring of blind people in the field of Orientation and Mobility under the direction of the Department of Education. It has been shown that blind people who are qualified in the field of Orientation and Mobility can give techniques to their students that other professionals cannot. Blind professionals specialize in teaching with the use of the long white cane in the field of Orientation and Mobility. Most sighted professionals do not teach or recommend the use of the long white cane. The refusal of the teaching of the long white cane will lead to problems later in life. When the students graduates from the educational environment to the rehabilitation environment, they will be required to use the long white cane while at training at the New Visions program at the Ho'opono Services for the Blind. The training program that is taught at the New Visions program is one of the best in the country. The New Visions program is celebrated for using the Structured Discovery teaching technique. This is where students are monitored non-visually by their blind instructors. This type of training has been known to be the most effective in the rehabilitation process for blind people in helping them

on their employment journey. I wish that the Department of Education would recognize the Structured Discovery method of teaching and move to employ blind instructors in their schools. I want to thank you for your time in hearing our joint resolution and would wish that you pass our joint resolution along to the next committee. Your support in passing this joint resolution will help to increase opportunities of hiring for blind instructors in the field of teaching Orientation and Mobility for blind students. Have a wonderful day.

Jaclyn Borsa

Testimony Before the Committees on Education (EDU) and Human Services (HMS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2021

March 29, 2021, 3:30 PM, hearing on SCR6, SR6

Good afternoon committee chairs, vice chairs, and committee members. My name is, Jaclyn Borsa, I am a blind woman residing in Ewa Beach. I am a member of The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii.

I am in strong support SCR6, SR6 and ask that you pass the measure.

I strongly support the testimony submitted by The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii and ask that you take our testimony into serious consideration.

Mahalo for your commitment to blind people of Hawaii and your consideration of my testimony supporting SCR6, SR6.

Hoku Burrows

Testimony Before the Committees on Education (EDU) and Human Services (HMS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2021

March 29, 2021, 3:30 PM, hearing on SCR6, SR6

Good afternoon committee chairs, vice chairs, and committee members. My name is, Hoku Burrows, I am a blind woman residing in Honolulu. I am a member of The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii.

I am in strong support SCR6, SR6 and ask that you pass the measure.

I strongly support the testimony submitted by The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii and ask that you take our testimony into serious consideration.

Mahalo for your commitment to blind people of Hawaii and your consideration of my testimony supporting SCR6, SR6.

Tammy Robar
Testimony Before the Committees on Education (EDU) and Human Services (HMS)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2021
March 29, 2021, 3:30 PM, hearing on SCR6, SR6

Good afternoon committee chairs, vice chairs, and committee members. My name is, Tammy Robar, I am a blind woman residing in Ewa Beach. I am a member of The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii.

I am in strong support SCR6, SR6 and ask that you pass the measure.

I strongly support the testimony submitted by The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii and ask that you take our testimony into serious consideration.

Mahalo for your commitment to blind people of Hawaii and your consideration of my testimony supporting SCR6, SR6.