

DAVID Y. IGE
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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 28, 2022

TO: The Honorable Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1945 HD1 – RELATING TO THE NEIGHBOR ISLANDS BLIND AND VISUALLY
IMPAIRED SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.**

HEARING: March 1, 2022, 12:30 p.m.
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent and offers comments.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to require the Department of Human Services to establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program that provides training and other services to blind or visually impaired individuals residing on the neighbor islands. Requires a report to the legislature. Appropriates funds. Repeals 06/30/2025.

Effective 7/1/2060. (HD1) The HD1 amended the measure by

- (1) Deleting the preamble, other than for a narrowed purpose statement;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 2060, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Department appreciates the measure's intent as it may serve to supplement services for neighbor island residents, particularly with transportation. However, DHS respectfully notes that services described in the measure are currently available to eligible participants of our Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Services for the Blind Branch,

Ho'opono. A number of the services are also provided by non-profit statewide centers for independent living statewide. Additionally, assistive technology devices and training are available via the State Grant for Assistive Technology, offered through the Assistive Technology Resource Center.

DVR's Ho'opono program provides outreach and adjustment to blindness services that include: Structured Discovery™ training; peer-to-peer mentoring; individual and group counseling for the adjustment to blindness; information and referral to community resources, including consumer organizations; training in orientation and mobility, daily living, self-care, and home management skills; benefits counseling; financial assistance with vocational training and higher education; competitive, integrated employment opportunities; low vision services and more to eligible individuals in their homes and communities via the Vocational Rehabilitation program, the New Visions program, and the Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind Program statewide.

DVR's Ho'opono New Visions program is the only training center to hold Structured Discovery™ certification in the State of Hawaii. DVR received certification from the National Blindness Professional Certification Board in 2008.

The proposed legislation requires that the pilot program's volunteer services shall be "... recruited, assigned, and supervised by the department of human services or an entity contracted by the department to organize and implement the pilot program." It further requires that DHS shall "... work with neighbor island transportation service providers and other individuals to develop a special needs transportation assistance service network to serve program participants." The measure would additionally require DHS to "establish procedures and requirements for accepting program participants." It also requires DHS to "enter into a contract with a non-profit organization to recruit, train, and supervise volunteer service corps members and to oversee the pilot program, provided that existing department personnel may be assigned to fulfill administrative and fiscal responsibilities of the support program."

If the measure passes, the Department will need new positions and a general fund appropriation to perform these additional duties and maintain current responsibilities. Additionally, the federal funding requirements of the Vocational Rehabilitation and

Independent Living Services for Older Blind grants would prevent DHS staff from working on services provided to individuals who are not eligible for our programs. Consequently, the proposed measure requires new 100% state general funded positions.

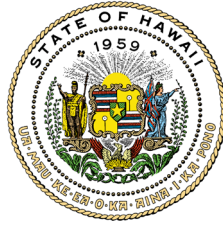
The proposed legislation also requires that: "[t]he department of human services shall identify and secure other sources of funding, including federal funding, to provide for matching funds for the pilot program[.]" As mentioned above, DHS will attempt to secure such funding; however, this will likely be difficult due to existing federal funding already allocated for these services, as noted above, to serve DVR's clients statewide.

DHS appreciates that any funds appropriated pursuant to this proposed legislation shall be in addition to and shall not reduce or supplant any portion of the base budget priorities identified in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII

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**Testimony COMMENTING on HB1945 HD1
Relating to The Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program**

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
REPRESENTATIVE SYLVIA LUKE, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE KYLE T. YAMASHITA, VICE CHAIR

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao
Director, Executive Office on Aging
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing Date: March 1, 2022
12:30 PM

Room Number: 308
Via Videoconference

1 **EOA's Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department
2 of Health, is providing comments on HB1945 HD1, Relating to The Neighbor Islands Blind and
3 Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program.

4 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure appropriates an unspecified amount of funds to the
5 department of human services for fiscal year 2022-2023 to establish and operate the neighbor
6 island blind and visually impaired service pilot program.

7 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this bill is to establish a neighbor island blind and
8 visually impaired service pilot program that provides training and other services to our hidden
9 blind or visually impaired individuals living on the neighbor islands. It also requires the
10 Department of Human Services to report to the 2025 Legislative session.

11 Mr. Philip Ana is EOA's Long-Term Care Disabilities Specialist. His job is to take calls from the
12 community statewide, answer questions, provide resources, and offer technical assistance as

1 needed. When he makes a connection, he can hear the joy of the caller on the other side of the
2 line. The person is relieved and grateful that help is on the way.

3 Mr. Ana strongly believes this is what this proposal is all about. Testimonies for HB1945 spoke
4 loud and clear that there is a strong desire to support other blind individuals, like Mr. Ana, who
5 do not have the same opportunities as those living on Oahu.

6 Is there hidden blindness in our community? Mr. Ana says yes there is, especially on the
7 neighbor islands, where services are limited.

8 **Recommendation:** EOA strongly supports the intent of this measure provided that its enactment
9 does not reduce or replace priorities with the Administration's budget request.

10 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
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March 1, 2022

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

House Bill 1945, House Draft 1 – Relating to the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 1945, House Draft 1 Relating to the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program. This bill would require the Department of Human Services to establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide training and other services to blind residents residing on the neighbor islands.

Equivalent programs and services are not available on the neighbor islands. The pilot program would provide statistics needed to support the need for training and services to individuals who are blind and visually impaired who live on the neighbor islands. Providing training, services and support to individuals who are blind and visually impaired on their respective island improves quality of life and independence.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Pagano

for KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
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ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

WRITTEN ONLY
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1945, H.D. 1

March 1, 2022
12:30 p.m.
Room 308 and Videoconference

RELATING TO THE NEIGHBOR ISLANDS BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

House Bill No. 1945, H.D. 1: 1) establishes the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program (NIBVISPP) within the Department of Human Services (DHS); 2) sets program service requirements for NIBVISPP regarding the types of services provided and the provision of services by volunteers; 3) requires DHS to contract with a nonprofit organization to recruit and manage NIBVISPP's volunteers and to oversee the provision of services; 4) sets reporting requirements for DHS; 5) provides definitions for clarity; and 6) appropriates an unspecified amount of general funds, with non-supplanting and matching funds requirements, to DHS in FY 23 to fund NIBVISPP.

B&F notes that, with respect to the general fund appropriation in this bill, the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

HB-1945-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/25/2022 9:43:49 PM

Testimony for FIN on 3/1/2022 12:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Louis Erteschik	Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	No

Comments:

Support.

National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii
Testimony before the Committee on Finance (FIN)
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 1, 2022, 12:30 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon chair, vice chair, and members. I am James Gashel, representing the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, fully supporting but also proposing an appropriations amendment to HB1945 H.D. 1 as passed by the subject matter committee.

This is an important bill for anyone who is blind or anyone who becomes blind while living on our neighbor islands. Added to not seeing, Isolation is a major barrier. Most services for the blind are based on Oahu and not readily available to neighbor island residents. The best help with independence and self-sufficiency is tied to a job goal; fine if you are 25 but not so fine if you are 75. We should do better by our neighbor island residents.

As found in the committee report, [HB1945 HD1 HSCR155-22](#): "...because of the concentration of support services on Oahu, blind or visually impaired individuals who live on the neighbor islands may be forced to choose between relocating to Oahu or living without services that would allow them to have full and integrated lives in their existing communities. This measure addresses the disparity in availability of support services by requiring the Department of Human Services to establish a pilot program to provide supplemental services to neighbor island residents who are blind or visually impaired."

HB1945 has a blank appropriation in section 3, but the pilot program proposed in this bill will cost money. How much it will cost depends on the actual program design, largely up to the Department of Human Services in consultation with the blind themselves. Therefore, NFB of Hawaii is proposing an amendment to appropriate \$25,000 for fiscal year 2022-23 to be used for program planning, not actual service delivery. Specifics as to the use of the funds are included in the suggested amendment language attached to this testimony.

Passing the bill as written in HB1945 H.D. 1, with a small program planning appropriation is the best way to move this matter forward and give hope to our blind neighbor island residents. The need has been documented and reported by the committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness. Mahalo for your consideration as well.

Proposed amendment to HB1945 H.D. 1

Amendment proposed by National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii

Purpose: to specify an appropriation amount and allowed purposes for fiscal year 2022-23

Proposed amendment to section 3 of HB1945 H.D. 1

(A) After the dollar sign insert 25,000; and

(B) after "fiscal year 2022-23," strike the remainder of the section and insert: to be used for planning the pilot program; provided that:

- (1) The Department shall consult with membership organizations of blind persons based on the neighbor islands and establish a pilot program work group composed of neighbor island residents who are blind;
- (2) The work group and the Department shall develop a written implementation plan, pilot program performance period, and a program budget to be submitted to the legislature no later than thirty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2023;
- (3) The Department shall include funding for the pilot program in its regular budget request submitted in 2023; and
- (4) Any funds appropriated pursuant to this section shall be in addition to and shall not supplant any portion of the base budget for any state or county agency providing services for blind or visually impaired persons.”

Brandon G. Young

Testimony of Brandon Young

before the Committee on Finance (FIN)

Hawaii State House of Representatives

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

March 1, 2022, 12:30 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon chair, vice chair, and members. I am Brandon Young, fully supporting HB1945 H.D.1, and supporting the appropriation amendment requested by NFB of Hawaii.

This is an important bill for anyone who is blind or anyone who becomes blind while living on our neighbor islands. Added to not seeing, Isolation is a major barrier. Most services for the blind are based on Oahu and not readily available to neighbor island residents. The best help with independence and self-sufficiency is tied to a job goal; fine if you are 25 but not so fine if you are 75. We should do better by our neighbor island residents.

I support the appropriations amendment proposed by NFB of Hawaii to appropriate \$25,000 for fiscal year 2022-23 to be used for program planning, not actual service delivery.

Otherwise, passing the bill as written in HB1945 H.D. 1 is the best way to move this matter forward and give hope to our blind neighbor island residents. The need has been documented and reported by the committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness. Mahalo for your consideration as well

Testimony of Virgil Stinnett
before the Committee on Finance (FIN), Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 1, 2022, 12:30 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair, and committee members. My name is Virgil Stinnett, elected state president of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i and I am in strong support of HB1945 H.D.1, and support the appropriation amendment requested by NFB of Hawaii.

I support the appropriations amendment proposed by NFB of Hawaii to appropriate \$25,000 for fiscal year 2022-23 to be used for program planning, not actual service delivery.

I am blind and have lived a full life as a blind person since 1996 at the age of 26. I am speaking to you from firsthand experience. I did not initially receive good training, yet had excellent blind mentors, members of the National Federation of the Blind, until I finally attended a training center with excellent blindness skills and attitude training in 2006. Without the mentorship of other blind individuals and superior training at a qualified center, my life would not be as blessed and full as it has become. I am a Hawai'i based entrepreneur serving our Department of Defense for over 16 years. This would not be so without the opportunity and mentoring given to me early on when i became blind. I am committed to ensuring this is an opportunity for other blind and low vision individuals in our state.

Mahalo for your support and consideration in moving this bill forward.

Testimony of Hoku Burrows
before the Committee on Finance (FIN), Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 1, 2022, 12:30 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon chair, vice chair, and members. My name is Hoku Burrows, a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i, in full support of HB1945 H.D.1, and support the appropriation amendment requested by NFB of Hawaii.

Speaking to you from firsthand experience. Growing up on the island of Molokai, I did not initially receive good training, and had to relocate At a young age as my disability was diagnosed with no resources available to us on Molokai, it forced me to move to Oahu away from my family while in my early twenties. My sister was not so fortunate, needing other kinds of disability services, moving away from family as a young teenager to Honolulu.

When I finally met blind mentors, members of the National Federation of the Blind, it was the turning point in my independence, self-advocacy and confidence as a blind woman. Without the mentorship of other blind people, I would not be where I am today, able to care for myself and participate fully in life and my community giving back.

I support the appropriations amendment proposed by NFB of Hawaii to appropriate \$25,000 for fiscal year 2022-23 to be used for program planning, not actual service delivery.

Mahalo for your support and consideration in passing this bill.

Testimony of Katie Keim
before the Committee on Finance (FIN), Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 1, 2022, 12:30 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon Chair, and committee members. My name is Katie Keim, an elected leader and member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i. I am in full support of HB1945 H.D.1, and support the appropriation amendment requested by NFB of Hawaii.

I support the appropriations amendment proposed by NFB of Hawaii to appropriate \$25,000 for fiscal year 2022-23 to be used for program planning, not actual service delivery.

I am blind and have had the opportunity to live a full life as a blind person 26 of my 62 years of life. I am speaking to you from firsthand experience as a Hawai'i blind career woman, who never thought I would work again, yet with exceptional opportunity and training, only lost 2 years of employment due to my blindness at the age of 36.

Personally I have been blessed to have received superior blindness related training, but know and have known so many others who have not had the same opportunity. Anytime without excellent blindness skills and attitude mentoring and training, is lost time that cannot ever be recovered for the many I know and have known. Long distance mentoring helps but does not replace first hand training. Blindness need not be a barrier to living a full and productive life. I am an example of what excellent training and opportunity can mean, that the impact of blindness on a person's life and livelihood can be reduced to nothing more than a mere nuisance. It is my hope it will be the experience of other blind people in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your support and consideration in moving this important bill forward.

Testimony of Leni Ebusutani
before the Committee on Finance (FIN)
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 1, 2022, 12:30 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon chair, vice chair, and members. I am Leni Ebusutani, fully supporting HB1945 H.D. 1, and also supporting the appropriation amendment requested by NFB of Hawaii.

This is an important bill for anyone who is blind or anyone who becomes blind while living on our neighbor islands. Added to not seeing, Isolation is a major barrier. Most services for the blind are based on Oahu and not readily available to neighbor island residents. The best help with independence and self-sufficiency is tied to a job goal; fine if you are 25 but not so fine if you are 75. We should do better by our neighbor island residents.

I support the appropriations amendment proposed by NFB of Hawaii to appropriate \$25,000 for fiscal year 2022-23 to be used for program planning, not actual service delivery. I am concerned that DHS acknowledges the much more limited assistance given blind neighbor island residents but does not have a plan to address this disparity as compared to Oahu. This problem will continue without this bill, which is unacceptable to me.

Passing HB1945 H.D. 1 with an appropriation to fund planning is the best way to move this matter forward and give hope to our blind neighbor island residents. The need has been documented and reported by the committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness. Mahalo for your consideration as well.

Testimony of Donald Sakamoto before the Committee on Finance (FIN) Hawaii State House of Representatives Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022 March 1, 2022, 12:30 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon chair, vice chair, and members. I am Donald Sakamoto, fully supporting HB1945 H.D.1, and supporting the appropriation amendment requested by the NFB of Hawaii.

This is a very important bill for anyone who is blind or anyone who becomes blind while living on our neighbor islands. Added to not being able to see, and Isolation can be a true barrier. Most services for the blind are based on our island of Oahu and are not readily available to many neighbor island residents. The best way to help with independence and self-sufficiency is tied to a job goal; it's fine if you are age 20 however, so fine if you are 60 years old. We should definitely do better by our fellow neighbor island residents.

I truly support the appropriations amendment that is being proposed by the NFB of Hawaii to appropriate \$25,000 for the fiscal year 2022-2023 to be used for the program planning, and not the actual service delivery.

Otherwise, passing the bill as it is written in HB1945 H.D. 1 is the truly best way to "Go For Broke" and move this matter forward and to give it hope to our fellow blind neighbor island residents. The need has been documented and reported by the house committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness.

Finally, Mahalo for your consideration of this bill and to moving it forward as well.

Testimony of Jaclyn Leilani Borsa
before the Committee on Finance (FIN)
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
March 1, 2022, 12:30 PM, hearing on HB1945 H.D. 1

Good afternoon chair, vice chair, and members. I am Jaclyn Leilani Borsa, fully supporting HB1945 H.D.1, and supporting the appropriation amendment requested by NFB of Hawaii.

This is an important bill for anyone who is blind or anyone who becomes blind while living on our neighbor islands. Added to not seeing, Isolation is a major barrier. Most services for the blind are based on Oahu and not readily available to neighbor island residents. The best help with independence and self-sufficiency is tied to a job goal; fine if you are 25 but not so fine if you are 75. We should do better by our neighbor island residents. Something else you get from blindness skills training is independence. Being able to learn how to do everything as you used to so you are self sufficient and not a burden on your family or friends.

I support the appropriations amendment proposed by NFB of Hawaii to appropriate \$25,000 for fiscal year 2022-23 to be used for program planning, not actual service delivery.

Otherwise, passing the bill as written in HB1945 H.D. 1 is the best way to move this matter forward and give hope to our blind neighbor island residents. The need has been documented and reported by the committee on Health, Human Services, and Homelessness. Mahalo for your consideration as well.