



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
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WRITTEN  
TESTIMONY ONLY

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 987 H.D. 1 S.D. 1  
RELATING TO HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM**

SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing Date: 4/5/2022

Room Number: 211 and via  
Videoconference

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** There are no fiscal implications to the Department of Health (DOH).
- 2 **Department Testimony:** The Department **strongly supports** this measure to amend Hawaii
- 3 Revised Statutes (HRS) §321-101 to establish recommended standards for hearing and vision
- 4 screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection and reporting.
- 5 The DOH recognizes that the early identification of hearing and vision loss, with appropriate
- 6 follow-up services, is essential for the development of children's language and communication
- 7 skills needed for learning in school.
- 8 HRS §321-101 mandates a hearing and vision program for school children to be conducted by
- 9 the DOH. This program was discontinued in 1995 due to budget reductions and with the
- 10 assumption that primary care providers will do the hearing and vision screening. The DOH does
- 11 not have the funding or staff resources to reinstate this program. Currently, an audiologist in the
- 12 DOH provides training and consultation to community organizations on hearing and vision
- 13 screening protocols and tools.
- 14 Improvement in hearing and vision screening for children is needed. Providers and community
- 15 programs vary in their protocols and training for screenings and follow-up. Screeners vary in
- 16 their training and skills for conducting screenings. Hawaii data from the National Survey of

1 Children's Health show that, compared with other states, Hawaii ranks low in rate of vision  
2 screening of 61.6% (35<sup>th</sup> of 50 states for all ages of children). Although newborns receive  
3 hearing screening, there is a need to identify children who develop hearing loss after the newborn  
4 period due to late onset or progressive hearing loss.

5 The proposed amendment to HRS §321-101 will allow the Department to set recommended  
6 standards based on national guidelines and best practices for hearing and vision screening and  
7 follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement. A statewide screening  
8 protocol will ensure that all organizations performing screening are using tools, screening  
9 procedures, and referral criteria based on evidence and best practice.

10 The DOH will use existing staff to support the proposed Hearing and Vision Program. The DOH  
11 will convene an advisory committee with professional, state, and community members to assist  
12 the DOH in developing recommended protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up,  
13 screener training, and data collection and reporting. Training will be provided at no cost to the  
14 community organizations.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
STATE COUNCIL  
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING  
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543  
April 05, 2022

The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
and  
The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
The Thirty-First Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Rhoads, Senator Dela Cruz, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB987 HD1 SD1 Relating to Hearing and Vision Program

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities **STRONGLY SUPPORTS HB987 HD1 SD1** which amends the hearing and vision program statute to increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss, by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement.

Early identification of hearing and vision loss is imperative in order to provide appropriate follow-up services to a child for the development of the child's language and communication skills. These skills are essential for the child to learn in school.

A statewide screening protocol will ensure that all organizations performing screening are using tools, screening procedures, and referral criteria based on evidence and best practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **strongly supporting of HB987 HD1 SD1**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**Executive Office on Early Learning**  
2759 South King Street  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

April 4, 2022

**TO:** Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Algaran, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

**FROM:** Coleen Momohara, Interim Director  
Executive Office on Early Learning

**SUBJECT: Measure:** H.B. No. 987, HD 1, SD 1 – RELATING TO HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM

**Hearing Date:** Tuesday, April 5, 2022

**Time:** 10:05 a.m.

**Location:** Videoconference & Conference Room 211

**Bill Description:** Amends the hearing and vision program statute to increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss, by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement. (SD1.)

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support**

Good afternoon. I am Coleen Momohara, Interim Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL supports H.B. No 987, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, and defers to DOH as it relates to vision and hearing screening.

EOEL is statutorily responsible for the development of the State's early childhood system that shall ensure a spectrum of high-quality development and learning opportunities for children throughout the State, from prenatal care until the time they enter kindergarten, with priority given to underserved or at-risk children.

**Early identification of hearing and vision loss, coupled with appropriate follow-up services, provides the resources and support needed for families of children experiencing vision and hearing issues. These supports are essential for children's language and communication development, and learning throughout childhood and beyond.**

In Hawaii, 4 per 1000 infants are born with a permanent hearing loss, which has been consistently the highest in the nation. The National Survey of Children's Health demonstrates that Hawaii ranks low in rate and vision screening compared to other states (43rd of 50 states for all ages of

children.) Although newborns receive hearing screening, there is a need to identify children who develop hearing loss after the newborn period.

This bill will allow the Department of Health to set recommended standards based on national guidelines and best practices for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement.

As we work to increase access to quality early learning opportunities for our keiki, early identification and treatment of vision and hearing problems support children in their readiness for learning, school performance, and academic achievement. Timely and consistent screening will allow program staff to identify and provide the necessary support to families of infants who may be impacted by vision and/or hearing concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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

April 5, 2022

### TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON JUDICIARY AND WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill 987, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1 – Relating to Hearing and Vision Program

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 987, House Draft 1, Senate Draft 1, which amends the hearing and vision program statute to increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement.

The sooner a parent is aware that their child has been identified as blind, deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing, the more advantageous it is for the child. The period from birth to age 2 is a critical time for all children to acquire language and cognition. During this period, blind, deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing children are often deprived of processes that promote healthy language development. Early identification presents opportunities for the family and professionals serving that family to ensure appropriate cultural and linguistic support for the child's development. This bill will increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection and reporting.

We strongly urge passage of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW  
Executive Director



Hawaii  
Children's Action Network Speaks!  
Building a unified voice for Hawaii's children

*Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: Senator Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Senator Dela Cruz, Chair  
Senator Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Re: **HB 987 HD1 SD1 Relating to Hearing and Vision Programs**  
10:05AM, Tuesday April 5, 2022

Chair Rhoads, Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and committee members,

On behalf of HCAN Speaks!, thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of House Bill 987 HD1 SD1**, relating to hearing and vision program.

Early identification of hearing loss is important to ensure children and their caregivers are provided the supports and care they need. Hearing loss can occur throughout childhood and therefore, it is critical that screenings are on-going and that there are established evidence-based practices for the medical providers and personnel administering the screenings. House bill 987 HD1 requires the Department of Health to set recommended standards for training, certifications, and qualifications of personnel who conduct hearing and vision screening and it also allows the Department to set standards for ages or grades of screenings, ensuring consistent practice for all children across the state.

Establishing protocols for hearing and visions screening and follow-up and screener training will strengthen the state's on-going work. It will also help make the system more equitable for all children. In the study, *Missed Opportunities: Do States Require Screening of Children for Health Conditions that Interfere with Learning*<sup>1</sup>, children most likely to be impacted by health barriers to learning (which include vision problems and hearing loss) are those living in poverty<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, data collection and reporting is necessary to understanding if current systems of practice are meeting their goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House bill 987 HD1.

Kathleen Algire  
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy

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<sup>1</sup> Gracy, D., Fabian, A., Basch, C. H., Scigliano, M., MacLean, S. A., MacKenzie, R. K., & Redlener, I. E. (2018). Missed opportunities: Do states require screening of children for health conditions that interfere with learning?. *PLoS one*, 13(1), e0190254. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0190254>

<sup>2</sup> Delaney Gracy, Anupa Fabian, Virginia Roncaglione, Katie Savage and Irwin Redlener, *Health Barriers to Learning: The Prevalence and Educational Consequences in Disadvantaged Children* (Children's Health Fund, 2016)

Date: April 4, 2022

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary  
The Honorable Karl Rhodes, Chair  
The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
And members of the Committee

Senate Committee on Ways and Means  
The Honorable Donovan M Dela Cruz, Chair  
The Honorable Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair  
And members of the Committee

From: Early Childhood Action Strategy

Re: Support for HB987, Relating to the Hearing and Vision Program

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Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) is a statewide cross-sector partnership designed to improve the system of care for Hawai'i's youngest children and their families. ECAS partners are working to align priorities for children prenatal to age eight, streamline services, maximize resources, and improve programs to support our youngest keiki.

**ECAS supports passage of HB 987**, which amends the hearing and vision program statute to increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss, by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, increased screener training, and enhanced data collection for quality improvement.

ECAS supports this measure because of the evidence that:

- Data from the National Survey of Children's Health shows that, compared with other states, Hawaii ranks low in rate of vision screening (35th of 50 states for all ages of children).
- Children with vision loss are likely to fall behind their peers in reading.
- Timely reporting of diagnostic information helps to identify deaf or hard of hearing infants early
- Early identification and referral for intervention services is important to ensure deaf/hard of hearing children can reach developmental milestones and be language ready for school
- The reporting of audiologic evaluation results helps to meet the national 1-3-6 screening, diagnostic and early intervention goals for newborn hearing screening.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.







**S E A C**  
**Special Education Advisory Council**  
1010 Richards Street Honolulu, HI 96813  
Phone: 586-8126 Fax: 586-8129  
email: [spin@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:spin@doh.hawaii.gov)  
April 5, 2022

**LATE**

**Special Education  
Advisory Council**

Ms. Martha Guinan, *Chair*  
Ms. Susan Wood, *Vice Chair*

Ms. Sara Alimoot  
Ms. Virginia Beringer  
Ms. Mary Brogan  
Ms. Deborah Cheeseman  
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the Superintendent*  
Dr. Bob Campbell, *liaison to  
the military community*

Amanda Kaahanui, Staff  
Susan Rocco, Staff

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair  
Committee on Ways and Means  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Committee on Judiciary  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 987, HD 1, SD 1 - Relating to Newborn Hearing Screening

Dear Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is in strong support of HB 987, HD 1, SD 1 which amends the hearing and vision program statute to increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement.

Hawaii has twice the rate of infants born deaf or hard of hearing per capita than other states. However, a number of infants who failed their hearing screening are lost to follow-up every year by the Newborn Hearing Screening Program, because their diagnostic evaluation results are not shared with the Department of Health. Screener training is also needed to ensure that consistent protocols are set for hearing screening. Through these improvements to the system, we ensure that the families of these infants are offered timely early intervention services that support the family and better prepares young children for entry into preschool by helping them acquire language.

Mahalo for the opportunity to express our support for this important legislation.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan, Chair