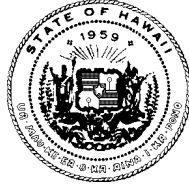


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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
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March 22, 2022

TO: The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HCR 13/ HR 11 – 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: Thursday, March 24, 2022, 2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference

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

PURPOSE: The purpose of the resolution is to encourage the Department of Education (DOE) to develop and implement an affirmative action program, to the extent permitted by law, 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 staffed by a team of professionals, many of whom are blind themselves. 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. The program 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.

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.

The Department welcomes opportunities to collaborate with the DOE to develop a pathway for DVR-trained and qualified applicants to fill DOE positions who can provide blindness skills training and support to DOE students.

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



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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March 24, 2022

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

House Resolution 11/House Concurrent Resolution 13 – 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 House Resolution 11 and House Concurrent Resolution 13, 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. If the Department of Education adopts this practice, not only would it affirm an employment first philosophy, but it would provide a powerful example to the affected students with disabilities by letting them know that their disability need not be a barrier when it comes to employment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director