

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF HAWAII

Testimony before the Committees on Human Services (HMS) and Government Operations (GVO)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022 February 8, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2381

Good afternoon chairs, vice chairs, and members. I am James Gashel, representing the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Hawaii, fully supporting SB2381.

Before I get to the meat of this testimony, NFB of Hawaii wants to give special thanks to our chairs, Senator San Buenaventura, Senator Moriwaki; our vice chairs, Senator Ihara and Senator Dela Cruz; all of whom have joined together as introduces of this bill, SB2381 and a similar bill, SB2144. Fifteen senators in all have put their names on these bills; just about all members of the HMS and GVO committees. We thank you for your support and understanding.

The advent of the information age is rapidly replacing conventional printed communications with use of electronic information technology in employment, education, and receipt of services. State entities have particular needs and responsibilities to provide everyone with equal and convenient access to communications relating to programs they conduct. Examples include both dissemination of information as well as completion and submission of electronic forms online, whether by employees or the public.

Access for people with disabilities is possible but too often not considered as new technologies are designed and deployed. Great strides have been made to create accessible technology tools. These tools include screen readers able to report words on a computer screen by voice or Braille output for people who are blind, and sign language interpretation or captioning of audio presentations for people who are deaf.

State entities are making great progress to fully embrace the Information Age. Doing so can have enormous advantages when the technology is well designed and accessible. We use the term "accessible" in this context to mean the technology is disability barrierfree, and, in that respect, we find the current performance of state entities to be uneven.

Ready access to and use of electronic information technology is essential for all citizens to participate equally in all state programs and services, and to receive and enjoy the benefits of the state's programs and services, which must by law be equally available without regard to disability. Cost-effective techniques and products exist to make modern communications technology accessible to individuals with disabilities by proactively addressing accessibility at the time of planning, design, development, and procurement of electronic information technology.

Recognizing this, the purpose of this bill is to establish and implement standards for providing access to electronic information technology developed, purchased, and used by state entities. The point of this bill is standards. Disability access to electronic information technology just won't happen without standards.

As far as access is concerned, existing law is very clear on this. People with disabilities are supposed to have access to information and services that is equivalent to access provided to persons without disabilities. The goal of equivalent disability access is pretty well known but far less often achieved. The reason is lack of clearly applicable standards to guide design, procurement, and deployment. Equivalent disability access must become part of the product specifications. That's the point of this bill.

Please note especially the reference in section 2 subsection (b) to development and implementation of disability access standards consistent with accessibility standards issued pursuant to section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act as amended in 1998. Section 508 requires information technology purchased by federal agencies to meet accessible use standards at the time the technology is purchased and not at some later date in response to a problem arising from lack of access. On its face, section 508 does not have technical applicability to state entities. More law is needed. By adopting this proactive approach with specific disability access standards applicable to state entities, Hawaii will join the mainstream of states now looking to the federal section 508 standards as an achievable accessibility blueprint.

More than just a blueprint, the section 508 federal standards are well known in the information technology industry. They first took effect in 2001 and were last revised in January 2017. With this history we can be confident that our agencies will have the support they need.

It's one thing to talk about disability access barriers in the abstract but quite another thing to experience these barriers for yourself. Try to navigate the Hawaii Safe Travel program with a screen reader. Not showing our aloha, that's for sure. Can it be done? Partly yes, and partly no. Being required to sign your name in a box somewhere on a computer screen you can't see is only one of several barriers. I'm sure we can do better.

SB2381 holds promise that we will do better. Section 2 (a) declares: "Electronic information technology developed, purchased, or provided by the State shall be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Access and use by individuals with disabilities shall be equivalent to access and use by individuals without disabilities." In passing this bill the legislature will be making a powerful statement on behalf of equal rights and equal opportunity.

SB2381 is a technology bill for sure, but for blind people, this is an essential twenty-first century civil rights bill. It will also become an important key to independence and equality for people with disabilities in our state. Mahalo for hearing this bill and understanding why we need it passed into law.

Finally, I should note that SB2381 is similar to SB2144, also requiring disability access standards for electronic information technology. Below you will find the comparison and recommendations of NFB of Hawaii regarding these bills. Mahalo for your consideration.

#### NFB OF HAWAII

Comparison and recommendations re: SB2144 and SB2381  
Thirty-First Legislature, regular session of 2022

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Hawaii is pleased with the interest and support shown for a bill to establish and implement disability access standards for electronic information technology. Bills with this objective have been introduced as SB2144 and SB2381. NFB of Hawaii supports both bills and recommends combining them with the following points considered:

- (1) We strongly recommend retaining the short title language in section 1. Of both bills.
- (2) Comparing the findings and purpose, section 2. Of both bills, NFB of Hawaii recommends the somewhat more concise and precise language of SB2144.
- (3) Regarding the purpose as stated in section 2. Of SB2144, NFB of Hawaii prefers designating the Office of Enterprise Technology and Services (OETS) as the lead agency to develop, implement, monitor, and revise the electronic information technology disability access standards, in consultation with the Disability and Communications Access Board (DCAB). Our preference is based on:
  - (a) Although the objectives of this bill fall within DCAB's overall mission, DCAB may not have the staffing and in-house expertise needed to serve as the lead agency; and
  - (b) The mission of OETS includes overseeing acquisition and use of technology by state entities. Therefore, development and application of standards for the state's technology is more within the wheelhouse of OETS than DCAB. That said, the ultimate choice of which agency to designate is entirely the legislature's.
- (4) Regarding the accessibility standards, section 3. Of both bills, NFB of Hawaii recommends language to state a standard of access for people with disabilities "equivalent to access provided people without disabilities." This standard is stated in SB2381, subsection (a) of section -2, under the heading: "Disability access standards. SB2144 has no comparable provision. Modifying the existing language of SB2381, NFB of Hawaii recommends the following policy statement prior to the standards requirements:  
"Policy: It is the policy of the State that electronic information technology developed, purchased, or provided by the State shall be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities equivalent to access and use by individuals without disabilities."
- (5) Regarding requirements for development and periodic revision of accessibility standards, NFB of Hawaii prefers the language as written in subsections (a) through (g) of SB2144. In particular, we note that clauses (2) and (3) of section 3., subsection (c) of SB2144, clearly specify consistency with the federal section 508 standards and guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility

Initiative. This matter aside, the differences between SB2144 and SB2381 in respect to requirements for the standards may be seen as essentially technical and editorial.

(6) Regarding definitions, NFB of Hawaii recommends a modified definition of “accessibility” to read: ““Accessibility” means the ability to receive, use, and manipulate data and operate technological or mechanical controls to achieve access for people with disabilities equivalent to access for people without disabilities.”



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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February 8, 2022

### TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON HUMAN SERVICES AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Senate Bill 2381 – Relating to Technology Access for Individuals with Disabilities.

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) support the intent of Senate Bill 2381, however, we would like to provide comments.

The bill would require all “Electronic information technology developed, purchased, or provided by the State shall be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.”

There are limitations to technology and cost to develop or purchase a one size fits all accessible technology. There is no one size fits all for people with disabilities. For public remote meetings, none of the virtual platforms are 100% accessible. To use virtual platforms, one must think “out of the box” to ensure accessibility such as using two windows on one monitor screen to view captions however not everyone has access to a large monitor screen to view the two windows.

The bill also requires “No later than December 31, 2022, the disability and communication access board shall develop and publish accessibility standards for electronic information technology for state entities, pursuant to subsection (a) and Section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998.”

DCAB is requesting to remove the December 31, 2022 deadline because DCAB currently has an unfunded position#101851, Communication Access Specialist. The position provides technical assistance and policy analysis on issues relating to communication access services and technology for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, blind, or visually impaired. Communication access includes, but is not limited to, the provision of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, captioners, note takers, telecommunications relay and related services, open and closed captioning, Braille, large print, audio description, and computer-generated speech. If the position is funded and restored, then DCAB could convene a working group of appropriate state entities, representatives, stakeholders, and other appropriate individuals and offices to develop accessibility standards.

DCAB is not the proper agency to enforce procurement of technology. The proper agency that has expertise to hardware, software and platforms is the Office of Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) and the State Procurement Office (SPO) with procurement policies.

DCAB's role would be the content delivery items such as following up with Department/IT staff and web content managers within Executive Branch to ensure that websites, social media, videos, public service announcements and other platforms are accessible for people with disabilities.

This bill would help to provide a consistent minimum level of accessibility in all state agencies.

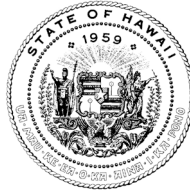
DCAB suggests the bill be amended in Section 3 by replacing "disability and communication access board" with "the office of technology services" to be the lead agency with DCAB in partnership to ensure accessibility.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kirstine Pagano*

*for* KIRBY L. SHAW  
Executive Director



## OFFICE OF ENTERPRISE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

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Testimony of  
DOUGLAS MURDOCK  
Chief Information Officer  
Enterprise Technology Services

Before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
Tuesday, February 8, 2022

SENATE BILL 2381  
RELATING TO TECHNOLOGY ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Dear Chairs San Buenaventura and Moriwaki, Vice Chairs Ihara and Dela Cruz, and members of the committees,

The Office of the Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) **supports** this bill and provides comments. ETS does not have the subject matter expertise to lead the effort in creating accessibility standards and policies. However, we can assist with technological consultation and guidance on the appropriate technology solutions to comply with policy. We look forward to assisting the Disability and Communication Access Board in the implementation of technology solution to support its accessibility standards.

We would like to provide suggested language for page 4, line 10

§ -2 Disability access standards. (a) Electronic information technology developed, purchased, or provided by the State shall be made accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.

Not all information technology systems, software, and services, especially commercial-off-the-shelf or software-as-a-service products, purchased are fully compliant with accessibility standards in their native state, but can be made more accessible through use of assistive technologies. For such purchased systems, software, and services, the State may not have the direct ability to remediate issues and could remain in non-compliance without assistance from the provider, the use of additional assistive technologies or alternate procedures to provide access. According to [Revised Section 508 Standards](#), “Synchronized Tools and Tech - Clarifies that software and operating systems must interoperate with assistive technology.” This entire effort will take staffing resources as well as funding support.

It is common that companies do not claim that their products and services are fully compliant, but state that they are committed to making accessibility improvement an ongoing journey for their customers with reference to standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the Revised Section 508 Standards.

ETS currently provides sponsorship, implementation, training and support for a web accessibility reporting tool made available to all web administrators and web content publishers across the state. The scope of this tool provides accessibility reporting for unauthenticated public-facing web sites. This covers only a portion of web accessible systems and does not currently include web applications that require credentialed access with dynamic input, which present a complex task as the effort for compliance scanning will be unique to each web application.

It is also important to note that the tool itself does not provide actual accessibility remediation for non-compliant items, but rather identifies and provides guidance on how web developers and content publishers can make their web sites and content accessible.

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



DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
STATE COUNCIL  
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
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February 8, 2022

The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Human Services  
The Honorable Senator Sharon Moriwaki, Chair  
Senate Committee on Government Operations  
The Thirty-First Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

**LATE**

Dear Senator San Buenaventura, Senator Moriwaki, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: SB2381 Relating to Broadband Service Infrastructure

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities supports the intent of SB2381, which declares the policy of the State that electronic information technology developed, purchased, or provided by the State shall be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities equivalent to access and use by individuals without disabilities.

The intellectual/developmental disability community uses a wide range of accessible technologies to access electronic information. The Council appreciates this measure as it seeks to include our disability community's need to access technology and participate in state programs and services.

For recommendations, the Council defers to and supports the Disability and Communication Access Board's testimony on SB2381.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in supporting the intent of SB2381.

Sincerely,

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

Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator

Testimony of Brandon Young  
before the Committees on Human Services (HMS) and Government Operations (GVO)  
Hawaii State Senate  
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022  
February 8, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2381

Good afternoon chairs, vice chairs, and members. I am Brandon Young, fully supporting sb2381. I am a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, and as a blind person, this matter is very important to me. This bill, if enacted, would strengthen and provide regulations for our state to make electronic entities accessible for those who are blind and visually impaired. I have a long history with inaccessible websites as a blind person, and I want to do all that I can to make things better in this regard. An example that I have encountered with inaccessibility deals with two major areas in our state. The first one is that I have advocated over the years for our organization, I have dealt with the Capitol's website. At this time, the website is useable to the blind who use screen readers. I have advocated on my behalf and on others to help make the Capitol website more user friendly for those who use screen readers to navigate their computer. Another example of inaccessibility deals with the University of Hawaii website. The university's website is poorly labeled and is hard to navigate. These are just two examples of where I have run into accessibility areas in the arena of electronic documents.

Our state has recently acknowledged that using technology is much better than the paper and pencil approach that we used for many years. It is now time for the blind to have an opportunity to use the state's website. The Internet is an entity that is not going away any time soon. As a blind person, I want the ability to use and interact with the services that the State Government provides for me. If this bill is to be passed, we will have a greater opportunity to access electronic documents in the state of Hawaii. Thank you for taking the time to hear this matter. I urge that your committee pass this bill.

Testimony of Katie Keim  
before the Committees on Human Services (HMS) and Government Operations (GVO)  
Hawaii State Senate  
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022  
February 8, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2381

Good afternoon chairs, vice chairs, and members. My name is Katie Keim, a blind woman and member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii in strong support of SB2381.

Each time a state agency's electronic digital application gets designed or updated, new barriers arise. The technology is there yet not implemented within the design of the online application. It is our intent to pass SB2144 which is a step in the right direction for those of us with disabilities by establishing standards ensuring the implementation of our needed access.

A top priority for working age adults with disabilities is to engage fully in employment we are qualified for, including applying for state agency positions. Imagine seeking employment which due to the requirements of the state agency is to apply online, yet you cannot simply because you cannot fill out or file the forms due to the lack of accessibility of the online process? And if you made it past the submittal of your application to an interview, yet what would you do if you couldn't get past the barriers on a digital interview platform? Just because the format was not accessible due to your disability? One more job opportunity lost even though there is existing technology that would enable an individual to participate. Far too often this is the case.

The importance of passing this bill to those of us with disabilities, is critical to our equality and full participation in our community. Mahalo nui loa for your consideration and support in passing this bill.

Testimony of Virgil Stinnett  
before the Committees on Human Services (HMS) and Government Operations (GVO)  
Hawaii State Senate  
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022  
February 8, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2381

Good afternoon chairs, vice chairs, and members. My name is Virgil Stinnett, a blind entrepreneur and elected president of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii in strong support of SB2381.

I stand in full support of the testimony submitted by James Gashel, Legislative Director for the NFB of Hawaii.

Mahalo and Aloha for your support in passing this important bill for our equality and access to critical participation of electronic information.

PETER L. FRITZ  
T-Mobile Relay: 808-568-0077

THE SENATE  
THE THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2022

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
Testimony on S.B. 2381  
Hearing: Tuesday, February 8, 2022

RELATING TO TECHNOLOGY ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

Chairs San Buenaventura and Moriwaki, Vice Chairs Ihara and Dela Cruz, and members of the Committee. My name is Peter Fritz. I am an individual with a disability, hard of hearing (HOH), an attorney, advocate for the disabled, former member and chair of the Disability and Communication Access Board and Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, and served on the board of nonprofits providing services to the disabled community.

**I support the intent of this bill; however, I respectfully submit that it would be more expedient to adopt the Access Board's published standards that address access to information and communication technology (ICT) under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and Section 255 of the Communications Act.** In addition, HRS §27-43 regarding the Enterprise Technology Service (ETS) should be amended to give authority to ETS to require all agencies to use uniform equipment and software. The State Procurement Office (SPO) should require vendors to complete Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates (VPAT) in all Requests For Proposals (RFP) to purchase ICT. I would ask the Committee to take legislative notice of the fact that State agencies that receive federal money are required to comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. DCAB currently uses the Access Board's ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) to determine State building compliance with the ADA. The State is already using some Access Board guidelines.

**The ICT Accessibility 508 Standards and 255 Guidelines.** These standards address access to information and communication technology (ICT) under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and Section 255 of the Communications Act.

Section 508 requires accessible ICT that is developed, procured, maintained, or used by federal agencies. Examples include computers, telecommunications equipment, multifunction office machines such as copiers that also operate as printers, software, websites, information kiosks and transaction machines, and electronic documents. The Section 508 Standards, which are part of the Federal Acquisition Regulation, ensure access for people with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities.

Section 255 Guidelines cover telecommunications equipment — such as telephones, cell phones, routers, set-top boxes, computers with modems, interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol products, and software integral to the operation of telecommunications function of such equipment.

The revised 508 Standards, which consist of 508 Chapters 1 and 2 (Appendix A), along with Chapters 3 through 7 (Appendix C), contain scoping and technical requirements ICT to ensure accessibility and usability by individuals with disabilities. Compliance with these standards is mandatory for Federal agencies subject to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 794d) as are State agencies that receive certain federal funds.

**What is a VPAT?** A Voluntary Product Accessibility Template, or VPAT, is a template used for creation of an Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) that a vendor can provide to potential buyers. The VPAT was created by the Information Technology Industry Council (ITI) and the General Services Administration (GSA) to further the accessibility of ICT products and services. The VPAT ensures that U.S. Federal Government agencies have documentation supporting the technical and functional performance requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Sample VPATs can be found at <https://www.itic.org/policy/accessibility/vpat>.

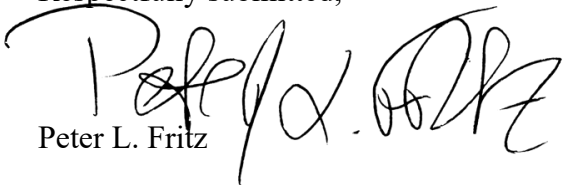
Essentially, the VPAT ACR is a way for a vendor to report what level of compliance a digital product supports in terms of accommodating users with disabilities. The vendor provides specifics on how the features and functionality of the products meet each technical requirement of accessibility standards such as the revised Section 508 standards, WCAG 2.0, WCAG 2.1.

**Suggestions:**

1. Amend this bill to provide that Hawaii adopts the Access Board ICT Accessibility 508 Standards and 255 Guidelines. An HTML interactive copy of the rule can be found here <https://www.access-board.gov/ict/> and a PDF copy can be found <https://www.access-board.gov/ict/ict-final-rule.pdf>.
  - a. Adoption can be by statute. Florida adopted federal standards requiring agencies to publish documents that comply with 29 U.S.C. 1194d by statute, or
  - b. In Rules. It may be possible to incorporate the Access Board's ICT in SPO rules. DCAB refers to the ADA Accessibility Guidelines when providing advice on compliance of State buildings with the ADA.
2. Amend Hawaii Revised Statute § 27-43 to grant more authority to ETS to standardize the programs and equipment used by different agencies.
3. Expand ETS' ability to provide support services to the executive branch by adding support personnel and providing funds for the expansion.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Peter L. Fritz

**SB-2381**

Submitted on: 2/3/2022 12:06:34 PM

Testimony for HMS on 2/8/2022 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Kimeona Kane	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

Kimeona Kane of Waimānalo in support of this effort to ensure that all people are equally able to access electronic technology.

Mahalo nui,

Kimeona Kane

**From:** [ALLAN HEGENT](#)  
**To:** [HMS Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony for SB2381  
**Date:** Sunday, February 6, 2022 12:52:45 PM

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**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

## To my senator Joy Buenaventura

Aloha Good afternoon chair , Vice chair and the rest of the committee.

First and foremost I would like to say thank you very much for letting me and allowing my testimony to be on record. My name is Allan Hegent i'm born and raise on the big island I am still currently residing on the big island and live on the east side of Hilo, More like Puna District. I am also blind and I'm 38 years old, I am not going to write a long testimony and waste The committee time, I'll just go straight to the point, I have high hopes that you folks approve and Pass this bill SB2381 The accessibility act, I'm not going to go into much details and telling you and the rest of the committee why, All I can say is it would be very beneficial to help us buying folks and the other disabilities out there as well.

Mahalo's's sincerely Allan Hegent

Sent from my iPhone



Testimony of Deb Braiman before the Committees on Human Services (HMS) and Government Operations (GVO)  
Hawaii State Senate  
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022  
February 8, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2381

Good afternoon chairs, vice chairs, and members. I am Deb Braiman, fully supporting SB2381.

Enactment of “The Hawaii Electronic Information Technology Accessibility Act” is critical to a totally blind senior such as myself, and others in the blind/deaf-blind community in Hawaii. I am advocating that the state of Hawaii be a leader/example to the nation, Beginning with the passage of this law, which would give access to all residents of Hawaii, that each voice is important to our state.

Thus, the “legislature would find that all electronic information technology developed, purchased, used, or provided by a state entity must be made accessible to persons with disabilities. Electronic information is rapidly replacing print media, and all residents need access to technology to work and to participate fully in state programs and services.

The legislature further finds that uniform standards are needed to ensure that state entities are proactively addressing accessibility in their communications, information technology development, and technology procurement processes.”

State entities are making definite progress to fully embrace the Information Age. Doing so can have enormous advantages when the technology is well designed and accessible.

It is fiscally responsible to write the program for accessibility in the beginning of development, rather than as an afterthought. Access for people with disabilities is possible but too often not considered as new technologies are designed and deployed. Accessible technology tools exist, including screen readers able to report words on a computer screen by voice or Braille output for people who are blind, and sign language interpretation or captioning of audio presentations for people who are deaf. The point of this bill is adoption and application of standards needed to ensure that the screen readers and other disability access technology tools can perform as intended.

The ADA clearly states that People with disabilities are entitled to the same information and services equivalent to access provided to persons without disabilities. The goal of equivalent disability access is well known, but far less often achieved. The reason is lack of clearly applicable standards to guide design, procurement, and deployment. Equivalent disability access must become part of the product specifications .

More often than not, documents are in PDF format, which is totally inaccessible to a screen reader. It is also difficult to find a signature line for a cursive signature.

Many people don't realize that not everyone has an assistant to help fill out/read documents. Also, there are those, who, don't have a computer to begin with.

An example of compliance is the fact that the Social Security Administration will, upon request, speak to an individual and read documents as necessary/requested by that individual, TTY as well.

Being required to sign your name in a box somewhere on a computer screen you can't see is only one of several barriers.

In passing 2381, the legislature will make a powerful statement on behalf of equal rights and equal opportunity. SB2381 is a technology bill for sure, but for blind people, this is an essential twenty-first century civil rights bill. it will also become an important key to independence and equality for people with disabilities in our state. Mahalo for hearing this bill

Debra Braiman

Email: [REDACTED]  
Mobile: [REDACTED]

Testimony of Donald Sakamoto before the Committees on Human Services (HMS) and Government Operations (GVO) Hawaii State Senate Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022 February 8, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2381.

Good afternoon chairs, vice chairs, and members. I am Donald Sakamoto, in full support of SB2381. The advent of the information age is rapidly replacing conventional printed communications with use of electronic information technology in employment, education, and receipt of services. State entities have particular responsibilities to provide everyone with equal and convenient access to communications relating to programs they conduct. Examples include both the dissemination of information as well as completing and submitting electronic forms online, whether by employees or the public.

Access for people with disabilities is possible, however too often it is not considered as new technologies are designed and deployed. Great strides have been made to create accessible technology tools. These tools include screen readers able to report words on a computer screen by voice or Braille output for people who are blind, and sign language interpretation or captioning of audio presentations for people who are deaf.

State entities are making progress to fully embrace the Information Age. Doing so can really have enormous advantages when the technology is well designed and accessible. We use the term “accessible” in this context to mean the technology is disability barrier free, and, in that respect, we find the current performance of state entities to be uneven.

Ready access to and use of electronic information technology is essential for all citizens to participate equally in all state programs and services, and to receive and enjoy the benefits of the state’s programs and services, which must by law be equally available without regard to disability. Cost-efficient techniques and products exist to make modern communications technology accessible to individuals with disabilities by proactively addressing accessibility at the time of planning, design, development, and procurement of electronic information technology.

Recognizing this, the purpose of this bill is to establish and implement standards for providing access to electronic information technology developed, purchased, and used by state entities. The point of this bill is standards. Disability access to electronic information technology just won’t happen without standards. As far as access is concerned, the existing law is very clear on this. People with disabilities are supposed to have access to information and services that is equivalent to access provided to persons without disabilities. The goal of equivalent disability access is pretty well known but far less often achieved. The reason is lack of clearly applicable standards to guide design, procurement, and deployment. Equivalent disability access must become part of the product specification. That’s the point of this bill.

It’s one thing to talk about disability access barriers in the abstract but quite another thing to experience these barriers for yourself. For example, try to navigate the Hawaii State Reapportionment Maps as a blind person with a screen reader. Not showing our aloha, that’s for sure. Can it be done? Partly yes, and partly no. Just having the maps first shown on the state’s election website in the middle of last year 2021 without no text description during their public input is one of several barriers. I’m sure we can do better.

SB2381 holds promise that we will do better. In passing this bill the legislature will make a powerful statement on behalf of equal rights and equal opportunity.

SB2381 is a technology bill for sure however, for blind people, this is essentially a twenty-first century civil rights bill. It would be an important key to independence and equality for people with disabilities in Hawaii.

Mahalo for hearing this bill and understanding why we truly need it passed into law!

Testimony of Hoku Burrows  
before the Committees on Human Services (HMS) and Government Operations (GVO)  
Hawaii State Senate  
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022  
February 8, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2381

Good afternoon chairs, vice chairs, and members. My name is Hoku Burrows, a blind woman and member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii in strong support of SB2381.

I stand in support of the testimony submitted by James Gashel, Legislative Director for the NFB of Hawaii.

Mahalo nui loa for your support in passing this important bill.