

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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

January 31, 2022

TO: The Honorable Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura
Committee on Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2437 – RELATING TO THE NEIGHBOR ISLANDS BLIND AND VISUALLY
IMPAIRED SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.**

HEARING: Tuesday, February 1, 2022, 3:00 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 DHS to establish a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program that supplements existing statewide services by providing training and other services to neighbor island residents who are blind or visually impaired. Requires DHS to report to Legislature before the Regular Session of 2025. Appropriates funds. Repeals 06/30/2025.

The DHS 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 the certification of 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;" and further, that DHS shall "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



CRAIG K. HIRAI
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
P.O. BOX 150
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

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

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 SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 2437

February 1, 2022
3:00 p.m.
Room 225 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.

Senate Bill No. 2437: 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 undetermined amount of general funds, with non-supplanting and matching funds requirements, to DHS in FY 23 to fund NIBVISPP.

B&F notes that 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.

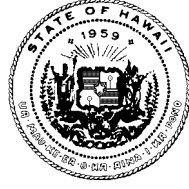
Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- 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.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS
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JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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

January 31, 2022

LATE

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The DHS 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.

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DVR's Ho`opono New Visions program is the only training center to hold Structured Discovery™ certification in the State of Hawaii. DVR received the certification of 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;" and further, that DHS shall "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.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF HAWAII

Testimony before the Committee on Human Services (HMS)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
February 1, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2437

Good afternoon Madam chair, Mr. vice chair, and committee members. I am James Gashel testifying for the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii (NFBH), fully supporting SB2437.

Madam chair, I want you to know of my strong support for sb2437. When enacted, this bill will require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor island residents, with funds to be appropriated for this purpose.

Why is this bill needed, and why do I support it? Let me answer the second question first. I am blind and have lived a full life as a blind person for 75 years since the day I was born in 1946. Consequently, I am speaking to you from firsthand experience. I have been blessed every day to have received superior blindness related training, but I know and have known thousands of other blind people who have not had the same opportunity. My heart goes out to them. Every day without good training leads to missed opportunities and lost time which cannot be recovered. For many, I know that blindness seems to impose insurmountable barriers, but I also know that this need not be so. Blindness need not be a barrier to living a full and productive life. In fact, it is literally true that the impact of blindness on a person's life and livelihood can be reduced to nothing more than a mere nuisance. That has happened in my life, and it can happen in the lives of others if given the opportunity for blindness related training, including outreach and encouragement provided by other people who are blind.

This bill finds there are approximately 12 thousand people in our state who are blind or visually impaired; most live on Oahu. About two thousand live somewhere on our neighbor islands. As a result, it is logical that the most comprehensive and by far the best blindness related training services are available on Oahu, due to economies of scale. We are fortunate in Hawaii to have high quality training for the blind provided by our state program called Ho'opono, and its New Visions training center under the Department of Human Services. I hope you will take the opportunity some time soon to visit this program.

Of course it is true that neighbor island residents may receive training at Ho'opono, but this often requires a period of from 6 to 8 months and some times more, leaving home, for example on the big island, and moving to Oahu, at least during the time of training. This is great for those who can do it, but expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. SB2437 says we can do better.

At its core this bill acknowledges the need for a supplemental services program for blind and visually impaired people who are neighbor island residents. The services authorized would not replace training at Ho'opono; quite the opposite. More than anything else, this bill would give neighbor island residents a pathway out of isolation. This bill means hope for better opportunities to enable blind and visually impaired people to improve their lives.

The bill includes a detailed list of services described as pier to pier outreach, sight loss adjustment, pier counseling support, and mobility training. Nine specific services are authorized as follows:

- (1) Outreach efforts to identify individual and program needs;
- (2) Coordination with existing programs to ensure that existing services are identified and used to the maximum extent possible;
- (3) Adjustment services, including individual and group counseling;
- (4) Access to and training to use telecommunications services to receive current news, weather alerts, and other vital public information;
- (5) Awareness development and training for use of computers, smart phones, and other communications devices;
- (6) Daily living, self-care, and home management skills;
- (7) Orientation and mobility training;
- (8) Advocacy training and assistance to secure needed benefits, services, and individual rights; and
- (9) Other services, including peer support needed for program participants to sustain independence and social integration.

Support for transportation, referred to as "special needs transportation," would also be provided. This section recognizes the serious limitations faced by blind and visually impaired people who are unable to drive but live in areas where having access to and use of a vehicle is a necessity since public transportation is infrequent or often not available at all. Nonetheless, support for special needs transportation is intended to supplement and not replace any public transportation services available.

Regarding the nine services listed as outreach and training, the advantage of pier support provided by qualified volunteers is fundamental to this bill. Think of it as blind people helping other blind people. Who could be more motivated to help others than those of us who have had the advantages which come from excellent training and services? We are the aloha state. When this bill is passed blind people will have the opportunity to reach out and teach other blind people; expressing the aloha spirit with our piers on the neighbor islands. Please help us to use our skills in service to the state and to our fellow blind people in need within our state.

Madam chair, Mr. vice chair, and committee members, enactment of SB2437 will truly be a "win, win," proposition for the people of our state. The need on the neighbor islands is known and acknowledged. Building on the strength of services provided by the state on Oahu, we can and should do better for our piers who live on our neighbor

islands. Supplementation of existing services, not duplication, is needed. Smart use of qualified volunteers will give blind people the chance to serve others. This approach is consistent with our values. Mahalo for your support to move this bill forward into law.

SB-2437

Submitted on: 1/30/2022 7:40:56 PM

Testimony for HMS on 2/1/2022 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Stan Young	Testifying for Hawaii State committee of Blind Vendors	Support	No

Comments:

Testimony of Stan Young, Chairperson, Hawaii State committee of Blind Vendors, before the Committee on Human Services(HMS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

February 1, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2437

Good afternoon Madam chair, Mr. vice chair, and committee members. I am (insert your name here), fully supporting SB2437.

This bill will require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor island residents, with funds to be appropriated for this purpose.

Why is this bill needed, and why do I support it? Let me answer the second question first. I am blind and have lived a full life as a blind person for 75 years since the day I was born in 1946. Consequently, I am speaking to you from firsthand experience. I have been blessed every day to have received superior blindness related training, but I know and have known thousands of other blind people who have not had the same opportunity. My heart goes out to them. Every day without good training leads to missed opportunities and lost time which cannot be recovered. For many, I know that blindness seems to impose insurmountable barriers, but I also know that this need not be so. Blindness need not be a barrier to living a full and productive life. In fact, it is literally true that the impact of blindness on a person's life and livelihood can be reduced to nothing more than a mere nuisance. That has happened in my life, and it can happen in the lives

of others if given the opportunity for blindness related training, including outreach and encouragement provided by other people who are blind.

This bill finds there are approximately 12 thousand people in our state who are blind or visually impaired; most live on Oahu. About two thousand live somewhere on our neighbor islands. As a result, it is logical that the most comprehensive and by far the best blindness related training services are available on Oahu, due to economies of scale. We are fortunate in Hawaii to have high quality training for the blind provided by our state program called Ho'opono, and its New Visions training center under the Department of Human Services. I hope you will take the opportunity some time soon to visit this program.

Of course it is true that neighbor island residents may receive training at Ho'opono, but this often requires a period of from 6 to 8 months and some times more, leaving home, for example on the big island, and moving to Oahu, at least during the time of training. This is great for those who can do it, but expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. SB2437 says we can do better.

At its core this bill acknowledges the need for a supplemental services program for blind and visually impaired people who are neighbor island residents. The services authorized would not replace training at Ho'opono; quite the opposite. More than anything else, this bill would give neighbor island residents a pathway out of isolation. This bill means hope for better opportunities to enable blind and visually impaired people to improve their lives.

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Regarding the nine services listed as outreach and training, the advantage of peer support provided by qualified volunteers is fundamental to this bill. Think of it as blind people helping other blind people. Who could be more motivated to help others than those of us who have had the advantages which come from excellent training and services? We are the aloha state. When this bill is passed blind people will have the opportunity to reach out and teach other blind people; expressing the aloha spirit with our peers on the neighbor islands. Please help us to use our skills in service to the state and to our fellow blind people in need within our state.

Madam chair, Mr. vice chair, and committee members, enactment of SB2437 will truly be a "win, win," proposition for the people of our state. The need on the neighbor islands is known and acknowledged. Building on the strength of services provided by the state on Oahu, we can and should do better for our peers who live on our neighbor islands. Supplementation of existing services, not duplication, is needed. Smart use of qualified volunteers will give blind people the chance to serve others. This approach is consistent with our values. Mahalo for your support to move this bill forward into law.

Testimony of Virgil Stinnett before the Committee on Human Services(HMS)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
February 1, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2437

Good afternoon Madam chair, Mr. vice 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 SB2437.

This bill will require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor island residents, with funds to be appropriated for this purpose.

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.

This bill gives this opportunity to the over 2000 individuals on our neighbor islands who are blind. We are fortunate in Hawaii to have high quality training for the blind provided by our state program called Ho'opono, and its New Visions training center under the Department of Human Services. Neighbor island residents may receive training at Ho'opono, but this often requires a period of 9 months and some times more, leaving home, for example from the big island, and moving to Oahu, at least during the time of training. This is great for those who can do it, but expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. SB2437 gives us the option to do better by working together with our DHS Ho'opono services, supplementing, not duplicating blind services.

We have to remember that not all blind adults qualify for the Ho'opono services. In order to be a part of Ho'opono's training program you would have to want to get back to work. For most blind folks, they just want to be independent. This pilot program would allow that to happen. We also have to remember that when a person becomes blind. They do not really know what steps and resources are available to them to take. Freedom to get around by oneself is a great start to the road to independence.

With the passing of this bill, blind people will have the opportunity to reach out and teach other blind people; expressing the aloha spirit with our peers on the neighbor islands. Please help us to use our skills in service to the state and to our fellow blind people in need within our state.

Building on the strength of services provided by the state on Oahu, we can and should do better for our peers who live on our neighbor islands. Supplementation of existing services, not duplication, is needed. Smart use of qualified volunteers will give blind people the chance to serve others. This approach is consistent with our values.

Mahalo and Aloha for your support to move this bill forward into law

Testimony of Katie Keim before the Committee on Human Services(HMS)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
February 1, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2437

Good afternoon Madam chair, Mr. vice 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 SB2437.

This bill will require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor island residents, with funds to be appropriated for this purpose.

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.

It is true that neighbor island residents may receive training on Oahu at the state blindness training center, Ho'oponoho, but this often requires a period of time from 6 to 9 months and sometimes longer. It requires they leave home, and a move to Oahu, at least during the time of training. I support this if an individual can do it, but expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. SB2437 gives blind people the opportunity to do better by acknowledging the need for a supplemental services program on our neighbor islands. The services authorized would not replace training from our DHS training center, Ho'oponoho; quite the opposite. More than anything else, this bill would give neighbor island residents actual tangible tools and hope for a way out of isolation.

There are 9 core blindness skills listed in the bill. Regarding the service listed as outreach and training, the advantage of peer support provided by qualified volunteers is fundamental to this bill. Early in my own blindness, it was the mentoring I gained from blind people helping other blind people, that was very instrumental in my own transition from a fully sighted individual to one who is now blind. I have taken what was given to me and mentored forward, always working for the best opportunity for others.

The enactment of SB2437 building on the strength of services provided by the state on Oahu, supplementation of existing services, not duplication, is needed. Smart use of qualified volunteers will give the chance to serve blind people on our neighbor islands. This approach is consistent with our philosophy and values.

Mahalo for your support to move this bill forward into law

Testimony of Hoku Burrows before the Committee on Human Services(HMS)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
February 1, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2437

Good afternoon Madam chair, Mr. vice chair, and committee members. My name is Hoku Burrows, a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i. I am in strong support of SB2437.

This bill will require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor island residents, with funds to be appropriated for this purpose.

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.

This bill gives this opportunity to the over 2000 individuals on our neighbor islands who are blind. We are fortunate in Hawaii to have high quality training for the blind provided by our state program called Ho'opono, and its New Visions training center under the Department of Human Services. Neighbor island residents may receive training at Ho'opono, but this often requires a period of 9 months and some times more, leaving home, for example from the big island, and moving to Oahu, at least during the time of training. This is great for those who can do it, but expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. SB2437 gives us the option to do better by working together with our DHS Ho'opono services, supplementing, not duplicating blind services.

In my case, other health issues were of more concern and kept me from being part of a good blindness training center. My independence and ability to live a full life, has come from strong blind mentors and this pilot program as described in SB2437 will give that to many others.

With the passing of this bill, blind people will have the opportunity to reach out and teach other blind people; expressing the aloha spirit with our peers on the neighbor islands. Please help us to use our skills in service to the state and to our fellow blind people in need within our state.

Mahalo for your support in passing this bill into law.

Brandon G. Young

Testimony of Brandon Young before the Committee on Human Services(HMS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022

February 1, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2437

Good afternoon Madam chair, Mr. vice chair, and committee members. I am (insert your name here), fully supporting SB2437.

This bill will require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor island residents, with funds to be appropriated for this purpose.

Why is this bill needed, and why do I support it? Let me answer the second question first. I am blind and have lived a full life as a blind person for 37 years since the day I was born in 1984. Consequently, I am speaking to you from firsthand experience. I have been blessed every day to have received superior blindness related training, but I know and have known thousands of other blind people who have not had the same opportunity. My heart goes out to them. Every day without good training leads to missed opportunities and lost time which cannot be recovered. For many, I know that blindness seems to impose insurmountable barriers, but I also know that this need not be so. Blindness need not be a barrier to living a full and productive life. In fact, it is literally true that the impact of blindness on a person's life and livelihood can be reduced to nothing more than a mere nuisance. That has happened in my life, and it can happen in the lives of others if given the opportunity for blindness related training, including outreach and encouragement provided by other people who are blind.

This bill finds there are approximately 12 thousand people in our state who are blind or visually impaired; most live on Oahu. About two thousand live somewhere on our neighbor islands. As a result, it is logical that the most comprehensive and by far the best blindness related training services are available on Oahu, due to economies of scale. We are fortunate in Hawaii to have high quality training for the blind provided by our state program called Ho'opono, and its New Visions training center under the Department of Human Services. I hope you will take the opportunity some time soon to visit this program.

Of course it is true that neighbor island residents may receive training at Ho'opono, but this often requires a period of from 6 to 8 months and some times more, leaving home, for example on the big island, and moving to Oahu, at least during the time of training. This is great for those who can do it, but expecting people to be uprooted from their families and home environments should not be their only option. SB2437 says we can do better.

At its core this bill acknowledges the need for a supplemental services program for blind and visually impaired people who are neighbor island residents. The services authorized would not replace training at Ho'opono; quite the opposite. More than anything else, this bill would give neighbor island residents a pathway out of isolation. This bill means hope for better opportunities to enable blind and visually impaired people to improve their lives.

The bill includes a detailed list of services described as pier to pier outreach, sight loss adjustment, pier counseling support, and mobility training. Nine specific services are authorized as follows:

- (1) Outreach efforts to identify individual and program needs;

- (2) Coordination with existing programs to ensure that existing services are identified and used to the maximum extent possible;
- (3) Adjustment services, including individual and group counseling;
- (4) Access to and training to use telecommunications services to receive current news, weather alerts, and other vital public information;
- (5) Awareness development and training for use of computers, smart phones, and other communications devices;
- (6) Daily living, self-care, and home management skills;
- (7) Orientation and mobility training;
- (8) Advocacy training and assistance to secure needed benefits, services, and individual rights; and
- (9) Other services, including peer support needed for program participants to sustain independence and social integration.

Support for transportation, referred to as "special needs transportation," would also be provided. This section recognizes the serious limitations faced by blind and visually impaired people who are unable to drive but live in areas where having access to and use of a vehicle is a necessity since public transportation is infrequent or often not available at all. nonetheless, support for special needs transportation is intended to supplement and not replace any public transportation services available.

Regarding the nine services listed as outreach and training, the advantage of peer support provided by qualified volunteers is fundamental to this bill. Think of it as blind people helping other blind people. Who could be more motivated to help others than those of us who have had the advantages which come from excellent training and services? We are the aloha state. When this bill is passed blind people will have the opportunity to reach out and teach other blind people; expressing the aloha spirit with our peers on the neighbor islands. Please help us to use our skills in service to the state and to our fellow blind people in need within our state.

Madam chair, Mr. vice chair, and committee members, enactment of SB2437 will truly be a "win, win," proposition for the people of our state. The need on the neighbor islands is known and acknowledged. Building on the strength of services provided by the state on Oahu, we can and should do better for our peers who live on our neighbor islands. Supplementation of existing services, not duplication, is needed. Smart use of qualified volunteers will give blind people the chance to serve others. This approach is consistent with our values. Mahalo for your support to move this bill forward into law

SB-2437

Submitted on: 1/29/2022 3:35:59 PM

Testimony for HMS on 2/1/2022 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Ann Lemke	Individual	Comments	No

Comments:

Hello Madame Chair and Mr. Vice Chair,

I wish to express my full support for this bill. I am a totally blind recently retired person residing in Koloa on Kauai and I have first-hand knowledge of how difficult it can be to find and utilize any services that may exist for blind people on neighbor islands. Since our state's financial resources are limited, we must innovate creative ways to offer services to blind people across the age, educational, and skills spectrum. From time to time, I need orientation to new travel routes to be as fully independent as possible. Formal services are seldom available, and I have had to train volunteers to help me learn bits and pieces of travel routes. It would be so much more timely, efficient, and possibly safer for me if I could use a neighbor island program as outlined in the proposed bill.

I myself am retired and would be glad to assist in any practical way possible to help this program be implemented here on Kauai.

I look forward to following the progress of this bill and will be happy to provide additional testimony for future hearings.

SB-2437

Submitted on: 1/30/2022 1:05:01 PM

Testimony for HMS on 2/1/2022 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Sherry Shimizu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Greetings for Senators:

I am typing in support of SB 2437, Relating to the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program. I believe it will help accomplish the individual goals of persons who are blind and or with low vision to receive training and other services from Department of Human Services on Neighbor Islands.

Sincerely,

Sherry Shimizu

LATE

Testimony of Deb Braiman before the Committee on Human Services(HMS)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
February 1, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on SB2437

Good afternoon Madam chair, Mr. vice chair, and committee members. I am Deb Braiman, fully supporting SB2437.

This bill will require the Department of Human Services to establish and implement a neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program to provide services and training for blind and visually impaired neighbor island residents, with funds to be appropriated for this purpose.

I am blind and have lived a full life as a blind person. I am speaking to you from firsthand experience. I have been blessed every day to have received superior blindness related training, but I know and have known thousands of other blind people who have not had the same opportunity. My heart goes out to them. Every day without good training leads to missed opportunities and lost time which cannot be recovered. For many, I know that blindness seems to impose insurmountable barriers, but I also know that this need not be so. Blindness need not be a barrier to living a full and productive life. In fact, it is literally true that the impact of blindness on a person's life and livelihood can be reduced to nothing more than a mere nuisance. That has happened in my life, and it can happen in the lives of others if given the opportunity for blindness related training, including outreach and encouragement provided by other people who are blind.

This bill finds there are approximately 12 thousand people in our state who are blind or visually impaired; most live on Oahu. About two thousand live somewhere on our neighbor islands. As a result, it is logical that the most comprehensive and by far the best blindness related training services are available on Oahu, due to economies of scale. We are fortunate in Hawaii to have high quality training for the blind provided by our state program called Ho'opono, and its New Visions training center under the Department of Human Services. I hope you will take the opportunity some time soon to visit this program.

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Regarding the nine services listed as outreach and training, the advantage of pier support

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Madam chair, Mr. vice chair, and committee members, enactment of SB2437 will truly be a "win, win," proposition for the people of our state. The need on the neighbor islands is known and acknowledged. Building on the strength of services provided by the state on Oahu, we can and should do better for our piers who live on our neighbor islands. Supplementation of existing services, not duplication, is needed. Smart use of qualified volunteers will give blind people the chance to serve others. This approach is consistent with our values. Mahalo for your support to move this bill forward into law.