



# HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

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February 3, 2023  
Room 309 , 10:00 a.m.

To: The Honorable Adrian K. Tam, Chair  
The Honorable Rose Martinez, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Culture, Arts and International Affairs

From: Liann Ebesugawa, Chair  
and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: H.B. No. 834

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

H.B. No. 834 would add a new section to Chapter 1 of the Hawai‘i Revised Statutes which would recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary and cultural heritage. Just as is the case with languages that are characteristic of ancestry or national origin, ASL is a language that is closely tied to culture and identity.

Over 40 U.S. states recognize ASL to varying degrees, from a foreign language for school credits to the official language of that state's deaf population, with several enacting legislation similar to H.B. No. 834.

It is important to recognize that ASL is a distinct language and not just translated English, but a language with its own culture and identity. **The HCRC supports H.B. No. 834.**

**HB-834**

Submitted on: 1/31/2023 6:29:39 PM

Testimony for CAI on 2/3/2023 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
cheryl B.	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Comments: I understand the reason for this bill and the statements about American Sign Language. It is my wonder why we are limiting this bill to American sign language as we know that Hawaiian, Japanese and other languages are equally in need of support for people of our islands and vary in expression from American sign language?