

Written Statement of
Jeannine Souki
Senior Manager – Government & Regulatory Affairs

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & CONSUMER PROTECTION

March 15, 2023, 10:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229, Videoconference

**COMMENTS FOR:
H.B. 933, HD2 – RELATING TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS
WITH PRINT DISABILITIES**

To: Senator Jarrett Keahokalole, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Commerce & Consumer Protection

Re: Testimony providing comments for HB 933, HD2

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair, and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony for House Bill 933, HD2, to require the Public Utilities Commission (“PUC”) to use the State Universal Service Fund (“State USF”) to provide free telecommunication access to information for individuals with print disabilities.

While Hawaiian Telcom appreciates the intent of this bill, we are concerned that standing up the State USF program to provide services for individuals with print disabilities will lead to a burdensome increase in costs to all consumers, including low-income consumers. The number of customers subscribing to landline phone service continues to decline each year, and adding another fee or charge to existing bills will likely accelerate the switch of consumers to alternate services.

The primary purpose of a State USF program should continue to be the provision of affordable and reasonable rates for basic residential telecommunications services. Hawaiian Telcom is not aware of any other jurisdiction using its State USF program to provide free telecommunication access to information for individuals with print disabilities.

We respectfully request if the Committee decides to support this legislation that an alternate source of funds be allocated for the purposes of this legislation rather than through the State USF program.

Testimony of James Gashel
Submitted for National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2023

March 15, 2023, 10:00 AM, hearing on HB933 H.D. 2

Good morning chair, vice chair, and members. I am James Gashel, representing the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Hawaii, proudly supporting HB933 H.D. 2 on behalf of people with print disabilities of all ages throughout our state. Mahalo to the Deaf and Blind Task Force for bringing this bill forward. Thank you for scheduling this hearing.

HB933 H.D. 2 is all about making information more accessible to anyone with a print disability. Blindness, visual impairment, and learning disabilities, including dyslexia are among the most prevalent forms of print disability. Lack of timely access to information can be a real, day-in and day-out problem for several thousand residents of our state who can't see or use standard print as their primary form of communication, leaving them at an information deficit even to read the daily newspaper or to know what's on sale at the store. Disabilities, like vision loss, often go with aging and can happen to anyone.

To address this situation, HB933 H.D. 2 would authorize the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to support a free telephone service for persons with print disabilities that offers state and local government information (including public notices) and other information (including current daily newspapers, magazines, emergency alerts, job opportunities, and other timely content) using accessible formats.

Accessible formats provide information in an alternative manner or form that gives persons with print disabilities access to information equivalent to access for a person without a disability. These formats include converting printed information into audio, Braille, or both. During the three House hearings, the PUC expressed willingness to work with the legislature and stakeholders to develop the program called for in HB933. Going further, the PUC said they need authorization from the legislature, which was added in the H.D. 1 amendment. Also, the PUC indicated a possible need for an appropriation, so the House Finance committee added an H.D. 2 amendment in response.

During these hearings, the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, consumer advocate, has said there are no similar programs to that called for in HB933. In response, please consider the Texas, Maine, and Georgia laws appended to this testimony. These states are joined by at least nine others on the mainland with similar programs.

If HB933 is enacted, the PUC will have a proceeding which would better define the service and costs. This can not happen without specific authorization by the legislature provided in HB933 H.D. 2.

By way of full disclosure, NFB of Hawaii presently fulfills a contract with the Department of Human Services (DHS), resulting in some of the services described in HB933. This has been a very successful program in Hawaii for several years. However, providing information services for persons with print disabilities is also a legitimate responsibility of the PUC through its Universal Service Program, analogous to support for telecommunications services for people who are Deaf.

We appreciate the start-up support provided by DHS, but believe the PUC, more than DHS, should have long-range responsibility to support a continuing service. Mahalo for considering HB933 H.D. 2. Members of the NFB of Hawaii strongly support this bill and hope you will do so too.

ATTACHMENTS

Texas:

Tex. Util. Code § 56.301
Section 56.301 - Audio Newspaper Assistance Program

The commission by rule shall establish a program to provide from the universal service fund financial assistance for a free telephone service for blind and visually impaired persons that offers the text of newspapers using synthetic speech. The commission may adopt rules to implement the program.

Tex. Util. Code § 56.301
Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., 2nd C.S., Ch. 2 (S.B. 5), Sec. 17, eff. September 7, 2005.

Georgia:

Section 46-5-30. Establishment, administration, and operation of state-wide dual-party relay service and audible universal information access service

(a) The General Assembly finds and declares that it is in the public interest to provide basic telecommunications services to all citizens of this state who, because of physical impairments, particularly hearing and speech impairments, cannot otherwise communicate over the telephone. It is further in the public interest to take advantage of innovative technological uses of basic telecommunications services to allow for universal access to information by blind and otherwise print-disabled citizens of this state.

(f.1) The commission shall select the service provider which will provide and manage the audible universal information access service and shall award the contract for this service to the offerer whose proposal is the most advantageous to the state, considering the price, the interests of the blind and print disabled community in having access to a high quality and

technologically advanced interactive audible universal information access system, the maintenance of such system, the training provided on the use of such service, outreach efforts, and all other factors listed in the commission's request for proposals.

Maine:

MRS Title 27, §40. ACCESSIBLE ELECTRONIC INFORMATION SERVICES

§40. Accessible electronic information services

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Accessible electronic information service" means news and other information, including but not limited to newspapers, provided to eligible individuals from a multistate service center using high-speed computers and telecommunications technology for interstate acquisition of content and rapid distribution in a form appropriate for use by such individuals. [PL 2005, c. 651, §1 (NEW).]

B. "Eligible individuals" means blind, visually impaired or disabled individuals who are eligible for library loan services through the Library of Congress and the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 701.10(b). [PL 2005, c. 651, §1 (NEW).]

C. "Qualified entity" means an agency, instrumentality or political subdivision of the State or a nonprofit organization that:

(1) Provides interstate access for eligible individuals to read daily newspapers through producing audio or Braille editions by computer;

(2) Obtains electronic news text either over the Internet or through direct transfer arrangements made with participating news organizations; and

(3) Provides a means of program administration and reader registration on the Internet. [PL2005, c. 651, §1 (NEW).] [PL 2005, c. 651, §1 (NEW).]

2. Provision of service. The State Librarian may enter into an agreement with a qualified entity to provide an accessible electronic information service for eligible individuals. If an agreement is entered into, the State Librarian may make use of federal and other funds available for this purpose. [PL 2005, c. 651, §1 (NEW).]

3. Telecommunications education access fund. The State Librarian or the Commissioner of Education may enter into contracts or order services on behalf of schools and libraries in connection with the telecommunications education access fund pursuant to Title 35-A, section 7104-B. The State Librarian or the Commissioner of Education may take advantage of any discounts available pursuant to the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996.
[PL 2009, c. 274, §17 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2005, c. 651, §1 (NEW). PL 2009, c. 274, §17 (AMD).

HB-933-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 9:41:21 AM

Testimony for CPN on 3/15/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tabatha Mitchell	Testifying for National organization of parents of blind children - Hawaii rep	Support	In Person

Comments:

Testimony of Tabatha Mitchell

Submitted for National Organization of Parents of Blind Children - Hawaii representative

Aloha members of the committee. I am Tabatha Mitchell, representing the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children where I proudly volunteer & serve the blind keiki & their parents throughout all of the Hawaiian Islands. We ask for your support for HB933 H.D.2 and thank you for holding this hearing. It allows me to share a couple of stories that I think you need to hear.

My daughter is a Braille reader. She is a high school Jr now. When she was 3 she was identified as blind after being diagnosed with a very rare genetic disorder that resulted from a genetic mutation. She was totally disinterested in TV, which is how we entertain even the youngest of our keiki. She could not play board games. She could not do puzzles. She could not see baby board books. She could not flip through Highlights & look at the pictures and get interested in reading. She could not go to the public library to check out books because they don't carry Braille & tactile picture books and regular picture books as you know them have zero excitement for a blind child.

She could not do a whole lot of things - because she could not see. Our society, in general, was not built for blind people; let alone blind keiki.

But what our blind daughter COULD do was call Newline. We found a landline phone that had big Braille buttons. She learned the keypad & learned to dial numbers on the phone because they were in her language - Braille. Not only was this how we introduced our daughter to Braille in her natural home environment, but this is how she accessed information about the world. She discovered that she could check the weather - on her own. She became the weather lady for our family of 7.

She became accustomed to Braille. It was part of her every day. Our family became accustomed to Braille - it was her language. This activity defused the concept that Braille was going to be SO hard to learn. Not just for her, but for our whole family and for all that came into our home and witnessed our little Eme dialing up the news & the weather on her Braille landline phone.

In addition, Newsline enabled her to be included in daily conversations. And to be included in our society and our culture of being informed. I often attribute her robust vocabulary and her current status as an honor student with her early exposure to Newsline - which she dialed up independently on her phone.

Fast forward ten years. I am currently working with a family of a very young blind child on the Big Island and they have the same struggles that we did. I was just talking with them about Newsline and how it works. I'm excited to share that it now contains fantastic content curated specifically for young kids - including Highlights & National Geographic for Kids. It is a tremendous resource for our blind keiki throughout the islands. A source for homework, a source for inclusion, and a source that will grow with them into adulthood & retirement!

Another blind student that I work with on Oahu is now being homeschooled because of lack of support in the public school system. Because of lack of training, he does not have strong technology skills & cannot efficiently use a phone or computer with a screenreader. I was just teaching his parents about Newsline and how he could use it to study current events and obtain many educational resources as they try to get on their feet and learn to homeschool.

Unfortunately, the number of parents forced to homeschool their blind keiki due to frustration with lack of support has grown over the years, and Newsline is a critical resource for them. I urge you to support HB933 H.D.2 It is a tremendous value to our blind keiki throughout Hawaii, and a resource for the blind that many depend upon daily.

TESTIMONY OF
LEODOLOFF R. ASUNCION, JR.
CHAIR, PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
STATE OF HAWAII

TO THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

March 15, 2023
10:00 a.m.

Chair Keohokalole, Vice Chair Fukunaga, and Members of the Committee:

MEASURE: H.B. No. 933, HD2

TITLE: RELATING TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PRINT DISABILITIES.

DESCRIPTION: Requires the public utilities commission to use universal service fund moneys to provide free telecommunications access to certain information for individuals with a print disability. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

POSITION:

The Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) offers the following comments for consideration.

COMMENTS:

The Commission appreciates the intent of this measure to help support individuals with print disabilities through provision of free telecommunications access to certain information.

The Commission observes that the State of Hawaii’s (“State”) Universal Service Program and Fund (“USF”), while established in HRS §§ 269-41 and 269-42 and via administrative rules promulgated as HAR chapter 6-81, has never been active due to lack of authorization to start a State USF program, although the federal USF is administered by the FCC for the purposes of assisting persons who have blindness and deafness. The Commission further notes that there are no funds in the State USF. The Commission appreciates the House Committee on Higher Education & Technology’s amendments that provide the Commission explicit authority to draw from the State USF. The Commission

also appreciates the House Committee on Finance's amendments that provide the Commission a blank appropriation from General Revenues as well as authorization to expend the funds equal to this appropriation. However, the Commission does not currently have explicit or specific authorization to expend funds for the USF program as part of its budget ceiling.

Should this measure pass, the Commission will be required to undertake a proceeding to investigate the design of the desired program including the amount of funds to collect from telecommunication carriers, if any, before an order can be issued setting the potential terms of the design of the program.

The Commission understands that the intent of this measure is to utilize funds from the State USF to expand the Ho'opono services program to include local news and events, as well as to cover outreach and training for program participants. The Commission observes that another measure, HB870, HD2 is also advancing this session, but notes that HB870 would not provide funds to expand the current Ho'opono program to cover local news and events.

Should the Commission open a proceeding in response to this measure, the Commission will invite Department of Human Services (DHS) representatives to help guide the design of the desired program since the DHS' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation currently administers the Ho'opono services program. To efficiently coordinate delivery of programs developed in response to this measure, the Commission may consider contracting with a third party administrator, such as the current service provider of Ho'opono services. To the extent that this is allowable and pursued, the Commission would seek a procurement exemption to allow for seamless program integration.

Further, if the Legislature wishes to pass this measure, the Commission respectfully suggests it be provided an exact budget authorization to expend funds via an increase to its budget ceiling equal to the general revenues contemplated as granted in House Draft 2. The Commission believes, based upon input from stakeholders, that an appropriate placeholder value for the purposes of this program is \$120,000 per program year.

The Commission is willing to work with the Committee and stakeholders to further develop this new section in meeting the Legislature's intent.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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DIRECTOR | KA LUNA HO'OKELE

DEAN I HAZAMA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR | KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
Wednesday, March 15, 2023
10:00 a.m.
Room 229**

**On the following measure:
H.B. 933, H.D. 2, RELATING TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS FOR
INDIVIDUALS WITH PRINT DISABILITIES**

Chair Keohokalole and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dean Nishina, and I am the Acting Executive Director for the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' (Department) Division of Consumer Advocacy. The Department offers comments on this bill.

The purpose of this bill is to require the Public Utilities Commission (Commission) to use Universal Service Fund moneys to provide free telecommunications access to certain information for individuals with print disabilities, and to appropriate funds.

The Department supports the provision of affordable utility services, including basic telecommunications services for all customers, regardless of their status, condition, or location. The Department appreciates the intent of this bill to assist individuals with print disabilities to have access to time-sensitive information such as state and local government information and public notices, emergency alerts, job opportunities, daily newspapers, and other content, but respectfully offers that the proposed use of "Universal

Service Fund moneys” as the funding source for such services, may have unintended consequences.

For context, the Federal Universal Service Fund (USF) was established to ensure that basic telecommunications services would be available to all, including low-income households and customers who may live in rural, high-cost areas. Over time, the USF has evolved but remains focused on ubiquitous affordable access to telecommunications services. When the regulation of telecommunications companies was evolving at the Federal level, Hawaii was undergoing through a similar modification of regulation, which involved consideration of the need for a separate State USF to address the possibility that the Federal USF may be inadequate to address the provision of affordable telecommunications services in certain high-cost areas in Hawaii. Thus, Hawaii stakeholders pursued actions that would allow the Commission to establish a State Universal Service (USF) program through Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) § 269-41 and the creation of a universal service special fund outside of the state treasury and require all telecommunications carriers to contribute to the fund under HRS § 269-42. However, as no state telecommunications carrier identified the need for additional monies beyond the Federal USF, the State USF was not stood up. Thus, a State USF program and its associated special fund currently does not exist to fund the services contemplated in the bill.

The Department is concerned with the proposed use of the fund for purposes not normally associated with the provision of utility services. It should also be noted that the Commission’s authority to assess all telecommunication carriers a contribution (i.e., a charge) to fund a State USF program will ultimately be passed-on to ratepayers of telecommunications service as another line-item charge/surcharge on each customer’s bills. This additional charge on consumers will likely exacerbate concerns with affordability of basic telecommunications services. Due to various changes in the industry, the customer base for traditional land-line home telecommunication services, for example, is noticeably shrinking each year. With more and more customers abandoning their service, this leaves a smaller base of customers to fund the services envisioned in this bill. Adding another fee/charge on customers’ bills may result in a more rapid pace

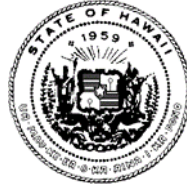
of customers transitioning to other services, further harming consumers that continue to utilize traditional home telephone services.

In addition, imposing a new charge on consumers of telecommunications services for the services contemplated in this bill can be a “social tax” imposed on a segment of society as opposed to the overall public in general. The Department offers that utility rates are regressive in nature where utility costs can often represent a significant portion of customers’ household incomes, especially for elderly customers on fixed incomes and low-income households. Thus, the Department respectfully requests that utility rates should not be used as a source of funding for non-utility purposes due to the adverse impacts on utility customers.

Thus, while the Department generally supports the intent of the measure, it respectfully requests that the proposed objectives of the measure be funded by a source other than utility customers due to the adverse impacts such funding requirements will have on utility customers, especially vulnerable customers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
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P. O. Box 339
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March 13, 2023

TO: The Honorable Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce & Consumer Protection

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: [HB 933 HD2](#) – RELATING TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACCESS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PRINT DISABILITIES.

Hearing: March 15, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 229 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this bill, provides comments, and defers to the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs and the Public Utilities Commission.

PURPOSE: The bill's purpose requires the public utilities commission to use universal service fund moneys to provide free telecommunications access to certain information for individuals with a print disability. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

The HD1 amended the measure by:

- (1) Providing explicit authorization for the Public Utilities Commission to use the Universal Service Fund to provide access for individuals with print disabilities, subject to a limit yet to be determined;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The HD2 amended the measure by:

- (1) Inserting an appropriation of an unspecified amount; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

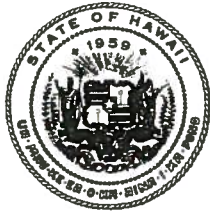
The Department of Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), administers state-wide vocational rehabilitation services programs for persons with physical and mental disabilities, including the blind and deaf communities. These VR services include independent living rehabilitation services for persons with severe disabilities, general services for persons who are blind and visually impaired, and the disability determination of claims for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income benefits issued by the Social Security Administration.

DVR recognizes the importance of providing timely and essential information to all community members, including those with print disabilities and those with print disabilities and limited English proficiency, in an accessible format. DVR appreciates that HD 1 includes language authorizing the Public Utilities Commission to use the State of Hawaii's Universal Service Program and Fund (USF) and that the HD 2 added an appropriation section.

Currently, DVR contracts with the National Federation of the Blind's (NFB) Newsline for this service. NFB Newsline provides news and other information from local and national newspapers and magazines via telephone, internet, or smartphone application. Anyone who is print-disabled, including those who are blind and visually impaired, physically unable to turn pages, or those with certain learning disabilities, is eligible for the NFB Newsline service. However, DHS understands that the current program needs to be expanded to include a more extensive variety of newspapers and periodicals.

DHS understands that once the measure passes, the Commission's formal proceedings to design the program may take additional time, and DHS respectfully requests an extended effective date. DHS will collaborate with the PUC in its process to develop the program, and DVR looks forward to the day that Hawaii's residents with disabilities have additional resources to access real-time information and local news.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of this measure.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • TTY (808) 586-8162 • Fax (808) 586-8129

March 15, 2023

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

House Bill 933 HD2 – Relating to Telecommunications Access for Individuals with Print Disabilities

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports the intent of House Bill 933 HD2 – Relating to Telecommunications Access for Individuals with Print Disabilities. This bill would require the Public Utilities Commission to use Universal Service Fund moneys to provide free telecommunications access to certain information for individuals with print disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires effective communication with people who have disabilities, including print disabilities. The goal is to ensure that communication with people with disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities. This bill would make time-sensitive information, including but not limited to, state and local government information, public notices, emergency alerts, job opportunities, and the daily newspaper, more accessible to individuals with print disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

HB-933-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 9:33:27 PM

Testimony for CPN on 3/15/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stan Young	Testifying for Hawaii State committee of Blind Vendors	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Two points that I would like to mention. In this world of digital technology, most information and data are created or communicated in a digital format. So, making information for communication and accessible for print disabled people should not be a burden to produce. Adding accessibility to print disabled people is the least that should be available to the print disabled community, which not only includes the blind, but the elderly, a fast growing sector of our population.

Many other services are made for those with disability. This telecommunications accessibility is only a small part of the total aids and service for the disabled. It is only fair that this is provided for the print disabled.

HB-933-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/13/2023 10:31:44 AM

Testimony for CPN on 3/15/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Lemke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello CPN Committee Chair, Vice Chair, and Members,

As a blind person who is retired, I believe that having access to print media in a timely manner is vital to my full participation in society. I totally support the testimony as offered by the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii. There are other US states which use PUC funds for a similar purpose.

Ann Lemke

Brandon Young

3/13/2023

Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2023

March 15, 2023, 10:00 AM, hearing on HB933 H.D. 2

Dear Chair and other committee members,

My name is Brandon Young, and I am a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii. I am submitting testimony in favor of this bill. This bill is very important to those are blind or visually impaired in Hawaii. This bill would provide access to a very important service known as NFB Newslite that many people who are blind use in Hawaii.

The bill that we support would provide funding to the Public Utilities Commission to provide the wonderful services of NFB Newslite. This service provides access to hundreds of newspapers and magazines from all around the world. The service also provides job listings, store advertisements and announcements about natural disasters. This service is very important to myself and other blind people here in Hawaii. I want to thank you for your time in scheduling a hearing for our bill. I ask that you would support this measure and move it forward in the Senate. Again, thank you for your time and have a wonderful day.

Testimony of Hoku Burrows

Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2023

March 15, 2023, 10:00 AM, hearing on HB933 H.D. 2

Good morning chair, vice chair, and members. I am Hoku burrows, a blind woman and member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i. I am in strong support of HB933 H.D. 2.

As a local blind kupuna, passing this bill into law is very personal to my staying informed and involved in my community. Using the telephonic service to gain and access information is critical to my staying on top of local and national announcements, emergency alerts, news that keeps me involved in my world that otherwise I would be isolated from.

I stand in strong support of the testimony submitted by the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i.

Please take our testimony and cry for access seriously as you decide to vote yes to HB933.

Mahalo nui loa!

Testimony of Virgil Stinnett

Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2023

March 15, 2023, 10:00 AM, hearing on HB933 H.D. 2

Good morning chair, vice chair, and members. My name is Virgil Stinnett, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i and a local blind businessman. I am in full support of HB933 H.D. 2.

Critical to my participation locally and nationally, I am able to use a telephonic service which gives me access to important business journals, breaking news, otherwise not available to me in traditional formats. Local events, political information, engage equally with my business peers, community service, and so much more, including receipt of critical emergency and weather alerts otherwise not always accessible or available to me and others who are blind and print disabled.

HB933 H.D. 2 is very personal to me and my continued access to information in my community. I stand in strong support of testimony submitted by The National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your support and consideration of passing this bill, an important and vital step to ensure the continuation of accessible telephonic services in Hawai'i.

Testimony of Katie Keim

Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2023

March 15, 2023, 10:00 AM, hearing on HB933 H.D. 2

Good morning chair, vice chair, and members. My name is Katie Keim, a member and leader in the National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i and a local blind professional. I fully support HB933 H.D. 2.

As a blind professional woman residing in Honolulu, I use accessible telephonic service as my access to local events, information that otherwise requires reading print or digital material not accessible to me. Through a variety of devices that are accessible to the blind, I am able to stay abreast of political, community and other important information that allows me to fully participate in my community equally with my sighted colleagues.

HB933 H.D. 2 is very personal and critical to my staying on top of information otherwise not available to me and my ability to continue to be fully engaged equally in my community.

I stand in full support of testimony submitted by The National Federation of the Blind of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your support and serious consideration of a yes vote to pass this bill that is vital to myself and my peers who are blind and print disabled enabling us to stay abreast of community information not otherwise accessible to us.

HB-933-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/14/2023 8:15:45 AM

Testimony for CPN on 3/15/2023 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emerie Mitchell-Butler	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of Emerie Mitchell-Butler
Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection (CPN)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2023
March 15, 2023, 10:00 AM, hearing on HB933 H.D. 2

Good morning chair, vice chair, and members. My name is Emerie Mitchell-Butler. As a blind person living in Hawaii, I strongly support HB933. Information is everywhere, and some of it is vital for us to know. However, this information, such as the newspaper, job listings, and public service announcements, often come in the form of print. However, many Hawaii residents have a print disability and therefore can't benefit from this information. I, as a blind person, also cannot read print. I would benefit from this vital information in an alternative format I can consume. Please support this bill so everyone has equal access to information. Everyone needs to know what is happening and what opportunities are available in their community. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.
Emerie Mitchell-Butler