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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that one out of nine  
2 people living in Hawaii is limited English proficient. These  
3 individuals often encounter disproportionate risks before,  
4 during, and after disasters. These risks include an inability  
5 to understand evacuation orders and procedures, information from  
6 emergency relief providers, impediments that slow access to  
7 emergency medical care, sheltering assistance, and other forms  
8 of emergent relief. Moreover, in the aftermath of a disaster,  
9 many limited English proficient persons encounter barriers to  
10 obtaining relief when applying for state or county programs  
11 including financial, medical, housing, and food assistance  
12 programs.

13           The legislature also finds that in the immediate aftermath  
14 of the August 8, 2023, Maui wildfire, language interpreters and  
15 sign language interpreters were not present at the shelters nor  
16 was any provision made to assist individuals through remote  
17 interpretation. In the absence of a planned coordinated



1 response from the Hawaii emergency management agency and the  
2 Maui emergency management agency, Hawaii's professional and  
3 community interpreters stepped in to fill the void. Non-profit  
4 organizations adjusted their budgets and strategic and  
5 contractual obligations to meet the needs of the Maui community  
6 and continue to provide services as needed.

7 The legislature further finds that, in addition to state  
8 and federal language access laws and regulations, section 308 of  
9 the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act  
10 (Stafford Act, P.L. 93-288, as amended) specifically requires  
11 entities receiving funding from the Federal Emergency Management  
12 Agency to identify limited English proficient populations to  
13 ensure that they are incorporated into the disaster management  
14 planning process; ensure that such populations can access  
15 disaster relief information; and develop and maintain a database  
16 identifying qualified language assistance programs that could be  
17 activated in an emergency.

18 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to  
19 establish a limited English language access coordinator within  
20 the Hawaii emergency management agency.



1 SECTION 2. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of  
 2 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,  
 3 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the  
 4 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,  
 5 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure  
 6 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by  
 7 \$ or per cent. This current declaration takes  
 8 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal  
 9 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act  
 10 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure  
 11 ceiling are that:

- 12 (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
- 13 serve the public interest; and
- 14 (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
- 15 addressed by this Act.

16 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
 17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
 18 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for  
 19 the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) limited  
 20 English language access coordinator for the Hawaii emergency  
 21 management agency.



1           The sum appropriated shall be expended by the Hawaii  
2 emergency management agency for the purposes of this Act.

3           SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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JAN 19 2024



**Report Title:**

Filipino Caucus; Hawaii Emergency Management Agency; Limited English Language Access Coordinator; Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

