
HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONVENE A STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE IN THE STATE THROUGH THE PROVISION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES.

1 WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of ensuring accessible,
2 affordable, and equitable health care for all individuals is in
3 the public interest; and

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5 WHEREAS, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandates
6 recipients of federal financial assistance to take reasonable
7 steps to provide meaningful access to programs, services, and
8 activities for limited English proficient (LEP) persons; and

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10 WHEREAS, the U.S. Census Bureau's 2021 American Community
11 Survey reveals that 21.5 percent of people in the United States
12 communicate in a language other than English at home, with 8.2
13 percent of them having a limited ability to speak English very
14 well, meeting the definition of limited English proficiency; and

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16 WHEREAS, in Hawaii, 25.9 percent of persons aged five years
17 and older speak a language other than English at home; and

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19 WHEREAS, the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic underscored
20 the critical necessity of services in Asian American, Native
21 Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander languages, with communities
22 having high numbers of LEP residents experiencing higher rates
23 of incidence and mortality; and

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25 WHEREAS, the August 2023 Maui wildfires increased the need
26 for accessible health care services, particularly for LEP
27 individuals; and

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29 WHEREAS, the language barriers faced by LEP individuals
30 contribute to decreased quality of care, poor clinical outcomes,
31 and more extended hospital stays, emphasizing the need for
32 language assistance services; and



H.R. NO. 56

1 WHEREAS, LEP individuals and those who are deaf, hard of
2 hearing, blind, or have low vision, may require assistance such
3 as interpreters, translated materials, or alternative formats
4 for effective communication during health care interactions; and
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6 WHEREAS, communication and language barriers are linked to
7 disparities in patient-provider interactions, particularly
8 affecting racial and ethnic minorities and the twenty-four
9 million adults with limited English proficiency residing in the
10 United States; and
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12 WHEREAS, LEP individuals have shared experiences of having
13 to retain their own interpreters in health care settings even
14 after requesting their health care providers to arrange for
15 professional interpreters; and
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17 WHEREAS, studies indicate that access to communication and
18 language assistance is integral to the delivery of high-quality
19 health care for all populations; and
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21 WHEREAS, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program
22 providers, Medicare Part A providers, and organizations offering
23 Medicare Advantage Plans and Prescription Drug Plans may need to
24 provide language assistance services to comply with federal
25 requirements; and
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27 WHEREAS, while major hospitals across the State have made
28 strides in addressing language barriers, much remains to be done
29 to ensure comprehensive language access in health care settings
30 to guarantee equitable and effective communication for all
31 individuals, particularly those with limited English
32 proficiency; and
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34 WHEREAS, effective communication is crucial in health care
35 and human services to prevent misdiagnosis, delayed medical
36 treatment, and barriers to necessary services and programs; now,
37 therefore,
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39 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
40 Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular
41 Session of 2024, that the Department of Health is requested to
42 convene a Stakeholder Working Group to make recommendations to



H.R. NO. 56

1 enhance meaningful access to health care in the State through
2 the provision of language assistance services; and

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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is
5 requested to invite stakeholders, including health care
6 providers, insurers, representatives of community-based
7 organizations, and language service providers, to participate in
8 the Stakeholder Working Group; and

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10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Stakeholder Working Group
11 is requested to:

- 12
13 (1) Study and assess language access in health care
14 settings across the State and on each island in the
15 State, including but not limited to:
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17 (A) Experiences of LEP populations using language
18 assistance services;
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20 (B) Existing language assistance services and
21 workforce;
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23 (C) Disparities faced by LEP individuals in access to
24 health care;
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26 (D) Practice of using family members and friends as
27 interpreters in health care settings;
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29 (E) Availability of interpreters; and
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31 (F) Requirements for providing interpretation
32 services in medical and health care settings; and
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34 (2) Make recommendations to enhance meaningful access to
35 health care in the State for individuals requiring
36 language assistance services; and
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38 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is
39 requested to submit a report of the Stakeholder Working Group's
40 study, findings, and recommendations, including any proposed
41 legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior
42 to the convening of the Regular Session of 2025; and

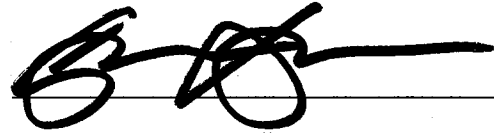


H.R. NO. 56

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Health.

OFFERED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'B' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

MAR - 6 2024

