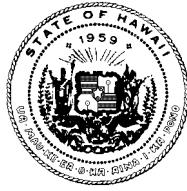


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

April 1, 2024

TO: The Honorable Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 2701 HD2 SD1 – RELATING TO DISASTER SERVICES.**

Hearing: April 3, 2024, 10:30 a.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this measure, provides comments, and defers to the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA), the Office of Language Access (OLA), and the Office of Community Services (OCS). DHS respectfully requests that any appropriation not reduce or replace budget priorities requested in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: This bill appropriates funds to establish Limited English Proficiency Language Access Coordinator positions within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Takes effect 7/1/2042.
(SD1)

The Committee on Water & Land (HD1) amended the measure by:

- (1) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Committee on Finance (HD2) amended the measure by:

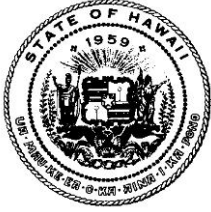
- (1) Changing the number of Limited English Proficiency Language Access Coordinator positions to be established to an unspecified number; and
- (2) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

The Committee on Public Safety and Intergovernmental and Military Affairs (SD1) amended this measure by inserting an effective date of July 1, 2042, to encourage further discussion.

We learned during the COVID-19 pandemic response and again during the Maui Wildfire response that information needs to be available in real time in multiple languages. Hawaii's rich and diverse multiethnic resident and visitor populations require that all emergency management information be translated and interpreters made available during all stages of an emergency management incident, starting with preparation. During multiple emergency management incidents in the past few years, the leadership of the Office of Language Access and committed community providers have provided most of the language assistance services in the immediate aftermath and have had to cobble together resources and strategies to meet the needs of impacted residents. The Office of Community Services also funded a multilingual access line for Maui residents who needed interpreters.

Additional resources are needed for HIEMA, OLA, OCS, and community providers to maintain and build capacity for a robust communication strategy in the face of emergencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Rm. 118 • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • Fax (808) 586-8129 • (808) 586-8162 TTY

April 3, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill 2107 HD2 SD1 – Relating to Disaster Services

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) would like to offer comments on House Bill 2107 HD2 SD1 – Relating to Disaster Services.

This bill would establish and fund limited English proficiency access coordinator positions within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency.

Effective communication is of the utmost importance during an emergency for deaf persons who communicate in American Sign Language (ASL). Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires effective communication for persons with disabilities. The title II ADA regulations state that “[a] public entity shall take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with applicants, participants, members of the public, and companions with disabilities are as effective as communications with others” (28 CFR 35.160)(a)(1)).

Therefore, DCAB requests the establishment and funding of an American Sign Language access coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. This will help to ensure persons with hearing disabilities are provided emergency information in a timely manner.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

JOVANIE DOMINGO DELA CRUZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 420
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
www.hawaii.gov/labor
Phone: (808) 586-8675 / Fax: (808) 586-8685
Email: dliir.ocs@hawaii.gov

IN REPLY, REFER TO:
OCS 24.1124


April 2, 2024

To: The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair,
The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Date: Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Place: Conference Room 211, State Capitol & Videoconference

From: 
Jovanie Domingo dela Cruz, Executive Director
DLIR – Office of Community Services

Position: Support

Re: H.B. 2107, HD2, SD1 – RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

This bill would appropriate funds, in amounts to be identified, to the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to fund one person to act as a Limited English Language Access Coordinator within the Agency for FY 2024-2025.

II. CURRENT LAW

As is noted in Section 1 of the bill, Maui was ill-prepared in many ways when wildfires caused disastrous consequences last August. One set of those consequences was that people who lacked strong English language skills were exposed to disproportionate risks before, during, and after the disaster. Those risks included inability to understand evacuation orders and procedures, inability to understand information from providers of emergency relief, impediments to emergency medical care and sheltering assistance, and other forms of emergency assistance.

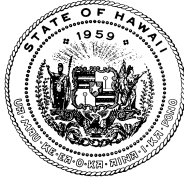
The Legislature further notes that language interpreters and sign language interpreters were not present at the shelters, nor was any provision made to assist people through remote services. There was no planned remote coordinated support from the Hawaii EMA, or from the Maui EMA, and as a result Hawaii's professional and community interpreters stepped in to fill the void. The Legislature also observed that non-profit organizations adjusted their budgets and contractual obligations to meet the needs of the people of Maui and they continue to provide those services to the present day.

III. COMMENTS ON THE BILL

The Office of Community Services **supports** H.B. 2107, HD2, SD1 provided that appropriations would not replace or adversely impact priorities in the Governor's Executive Budget Request. OCS recognizes that the Maui wildfires have exposed large areas in which our society is unprepared for disasters of multiple dimensions, and that the consequences hit our communities in multiple different ways. People who are disadvantaged tend to be hit the hardest. And they are the people who are usually OCS's core constituents – lower income people, immigrants, the elderly, and others who are disadvantaged. We as a State have a lot of hard work before us to be even remotely prepared for the next disaster that comes our way, from weather, fires, or other threats.

We respectfully call the Committee's attention to a Honolulu Civil Beat article that was posted recently, entitled "People with Limited English Lost Money and Help in Lahaina Response." As the article points out, this is already a serious, real-world problem.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify.



**STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS**

1177 Alakea Street, Room B-100
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
Phone: (808) 586-8730 / Fax: (808) 586-8733
doh.ola@doh.hawaii.gov

In reply, please refer to:
File: 24-016

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2107 HD2 SD1
RELATING TO DISASTER SERVICES**

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Hearing Date: 4/3/2024

Room Number: Conf. Room 211 &
Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** This measure may impact the priorities identified in the Governor's
2 Executive Supplemental Budget Request.

3 **Agency's Position:** The Office of Language Access (OLA) supports this measure, provided the
4 measure's passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities in the Governor's Executive
5 Supplemental Budget Request and defers to the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-
6 EMA) on implementation and resource needs.

7 **Purpose and Justification:** The purpose of this measure is to appropriate funds to establish the
8 position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within HI-EMA and declares that
9 the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded.

10 The Maui wildfires serve as a significant reminder to all of us that disasters and emergency
11 events can occur at any time with little or no warning. They also highlight the need for language
12 access within our diverse community in the state.

13 Hawaii is one of the most culturally diverse states and has one of the highest proportions of non-
14 English speakers in the nation. Many of these non-English speakers are immigrants and migrants
15 with limited English proficiency (LEP). According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018-2022
16 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, approximately 25.73%, or 351,542, of

1 Hawaii's residents aged 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home. Of these,
2 150,743, or 11.06%, indicated that they speak English "less than very well."

3 English proficiency, or the lack thereof, significantly impacts people's safety and wellness,
4 putting them at risk in situations where they are unable to understand written or verbal warnings
5 about dangerous conditions, impending severe weather, appropriate responses to emergency
6 sirens/warnings, and communication with authorities. Therefore, prominently identifying the
7 language access component as a key element in planning and public-facing activities is essential.

8 HI-EMA, as the coordinating agency for emergencies between federal and local agencies, is
9 tasked with a great responsibility in planning for and responding to both natural and human-
10 caused emergencies. Having a dedicated Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator
11 who understands the organizational structure and has expertise in emergency management can
12 enhance and expedite the communication of critical information to persons with LEP.

13 OLA is committed to continuing collaboration with HI-EMA and all state language access
14 coordinators in implementing language access obligations to ensure meaningful access for all
15 persons with LEP in our state.

16 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2107
RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair,**

Hearing Date: April 3, 2024

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2107
RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES**

Hearing Date: April 3, 2024

Dear Chair Senator Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Senator Sharon Moriwaki and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

I am writing in support of HB2107 as it appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency.

One out of nine people living in Hawaii has limited English proficiency. During disasters, they face disproportionate risks due to challenges in understanding evacuation orders, emergency relief information, and accessing essential services like emergency medical care and shelter assistance. The aftermath of a disaster often brings barriers for individuals with limited English proficiency when applying for state or county programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food assistance programs. The absence of language interpreters at shelters during the August 8, 2023, Maui wildfire underscores the critical need for a coordinated response. Hawaii's professional and community interpreters filled the void, demonstrating the community's resilience. However, establishing a dedicated Limited English Language Access Coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency will ensure a systematic and planned approach to language access during emergencies.

Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center realized during the Pandemic that our COFA community and other limited English speakers from the Pacific Island community were not able to receive information on a timely basis. Again, during the Maui wildfire disaster, we are faced with the same situation with families needing interpretation and assistance to navigate and access services. We have been sending COFA interpreters to Maui since September to address the need identified, however, having someone to coordinate language access services from the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency will aid families in a timelier manner during a disaster.

Waipahu Safe Haven Center fully supports HB2107 and look forward to its passage.

Thank you for your consideration,

Barbara Tom,
Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Cen



April 3, 2024

Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz

Vice Sharon Y. Moriwaki

Sen. Henry J.C. Aquino

Sen. Lynn DeCoite

Sen. Troy N. Hashimoto

Sen. Lorraine R. Inouye

Sen. Dru Mamo Kanuha

Sen. Michelle N. Kidani

Sen. Donna Mercado Kim

Sen. Chris Lee

Sen. Maile S.L. Shimabukuro

Sen. Glenn Wakai

Sen. Kurt Fevella

Re: HB2107 HD2 SD1 Related to Disaster Services

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

The Hawai'i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (HSCADV) addresses the social, political, and economic impacts of domestic violence on individuals, families, and communities. We are a statewide partnership of domestic violence programs and shelters. On behalf of HSCADV and our 28 member programs statewide, I respectfully submit testimony in **support of HB2107 HD2 SD1**, which appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency.

One out of nine people living in Hawai'i has limited English proficiency. During disasters, they face disproportionate risks due to challenges in understanding evacuation orders, emergency relief information, and accessing essential services like emergency medical care and shelter assistance. The aftermath of a disaster often brings barriers for individuals with limited English proficiency when applying for state or county programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food assistance programs. The absence of language interpreters at shelters during the August 8, 2023, Maui wildfire underscores the critical need for a coordinated response. Hawai'i's professional and community interpreters filled the void, demonstrating the community's resilience. However, establishing a dedicated Limited English Language Access Coordinator within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency will ensure a systematic and planned approach to language access during emergencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Angelina Mercado, Executive Director



COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) Support: HB2107

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 10:30 a.m. Conference Room 211

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

I am representing the Hawai'i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA) in strong support of HB2107. This bill appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency.

It is crucial to recognize the diverse linguistic landscape of Hawai'i, where one out of nine people has limited English proficiency. When disasters strike, individuals with limited English proficiency face exacerbated risks due to their difficulties in understanding evacuation orders, emergency relief information, and accessing essential services such as emergency medical care and shelter assistance.

The aftermath of the Maui wildfire on August 8, 2023, serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges faced by individuals with limited English proficiency during emergencies. The absence of language interpreters at shelters highlighted the critical need for a coordinated response to ensure equitable access to vital services. In response, Hawaii's professional and community interpreters stepped up admirably, showcasing the resilience of our community. However, reliance on ad hoc solutions is not sustainable nor equitable.

Establishing a dedicated Limited English Language Access Coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency is a proactive step towards ensuring a systematic and planned approach to language access during emergencies. This coordinator would play a pivotal role in coordinating language services, training emergency personnel on language access protocols, and ensuring the availability of interpreters and translated materials when disasters strike.

By passing HB2107, we demonstrate our commitment to equity and inclusion in emergency response efforts. It is imperative that all members of our community, regardless of language



proficiency, have equal access to life-saving information and services during times of crisis.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I urge you to support the successful passage of HB2107.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Frederick', is positioned above the typed name.

Anne Frederick
Executive Director



**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2107
RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES**

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: April 3, 2024

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

The Hawaii Coalition for Immigrant Rights (HCIR) **fully supports HB2107**, which appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency.

One out of nine people living in Hawaii has limited English proficiency. During disasters, they face disproportionate risks due to challenges in understanding evacuation orders, emergency relief information, and accessing essential services like emergency medical care and shelter assistance. The aftermath of a disaster often brings barriers for individuals with limited English proficiency when applying for state or county programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food assistance.

Establishing a Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator position within the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency is not just a proactive step; it's a smart investment for Hawaii. While upfront costs may be associated with funding this position, the long-term benefits outweigh them. Without a designated coordinator, the state may find itself scrambling to secure interpreters and translate materials in multiple languages during a crisis, which can be time-consuming and expensive. Additionally, the lack of proper language support can lead to misunderstandings, delayed response efforts, and even legal liabilities.

By investing in a Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator now, Hawaii can save significant resources for the future. This coordinator can develop comprehensive language access plans, establish partnerships with language service providers, and ensure that essential information is readily available in multiple languages before disasters. This proactive approach enhances the state's emergency preparedness and response capabilities and minimizes the financial burden associated with ad-hoc language assistance efforts.



Providing equal access to emergency services and resources for individuals with limited English proficiency is not just a matter of compliance; it's a matter of equity and safety. Prioritizing language access can better protect our communities and LEP population and ensure that everyone has the information and support they need to stay safe during emergencies.

Following the Maui wildfire, HCIR convened a Maui Emergency Response call with over 80 participants from immigrant-and-migrant-led organizations, community groups established as a response to the wildfire, and state and federal agencies to support and advocate for immigrant, migrant, and limited-English proficient survivors affected by the disaster. The meeting underscored the pressing need for language access. In response, an ad hoc committee was formed to work with various organizations to improve language access practices in response and recovery and ensure the community we are serving has equal access to navigating the available resources and assistance.

Before the Maui Wildfire, HCIR, Pacific Gateway Center, and other immigrant service providers collaborated to launch the Assisting Immigrants Deserving Equity (AIDE) cohort within the Office of Community Services-funded Immigrant Resource Center as part of our commitment to expand access and enhance support for the immigrant community in Hawai'i. When the Maui Wildfire occurred, we recognized an urgent need to redirect our efforts toward assisting the immigrant community in Maui. HCIR organized and conducted training sessions to establish a multilingual hotline. This hotline served as an effort for an equitable opportunity for recovery for individuals seeking assistance and resources in their native languages.

The absence of language interpreters and in-language public-facing materials after the Maui Wildfire was unnecessary. Hawaii's professional and community interpreters filled the void. However, establishing a dedicated Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency will ensure a systematic, proactive, and planned approach to language access during emergencies.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Maria Rallojaj

Policy and Communications Coordinator



Testimony in SUPPORT of [HB2107 HD2 SD1](#) – REGARDING DISASTER SERVICES

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair and Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: April 3, 2024 | Conference Room 211 | Letter Date: April 1, 2024

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to urge Members of this Committee to support and pass HB2107 HD2 SD1, which will appropriate funds to establish a new position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator with the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA).

At The Legal Clinic, a nonprofit organization that provides free legal services on immigration matters to low-income Hawai'i residents, we come into contact on a regular basis with immigrants who speak little or no English. Our staff regularly involve translators and interpreters to ensure that clients understand all the details of their immigration status, court cases, government requirements for citizenship applications, and the other services we offer.

It is even more immediately critical in a *disaster* that all residents be enabled to understand the nature of the crisis, evacuation orders, and how to access essential food, shelter, and emergency medical care. The recent fires in Maui made evident how important clear communication is during a crisis. In Lahaina, one third or more of displaced residents are believed to be immigrants. Even now, in the ongoing aftermath, many residents have been unable or unwilling to seek assistance, with language barriers playing a significant role.

Nearly one in five residents in Hawai'i is foreign-born. They do not necessarily start out speaking English, and while many become proficient in time, there may be years in which they struggle to understand the dominant language around them. According to statistics from the State's own Bureau of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (2016 report), 84% of foreign-born Hawai'i residents speak another language in their homes.

Improved language access is federally mandated and has been acknowledged in State government as a goal, but little implemented. HB2107 offers an opportunity for this Committee to be in the forefront of efforts in Hawai'i to address language barriers, and to ensure a systematic and planned approach to language access during emergencies. The safety and security of all our state's residents will benefit.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to the successful passage of HB2107!

Respectfully,

Bettina Mok
Executive Director
director@tlchawaii.org

HB-2107-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 8:03:16 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2024 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Testifying for Hawaii Friends of Civil Rights	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:



TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF H.B. 2107, HD2, SD1 RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES

To: Chair Donovan Dela Cruz and Vice Chair Sharon Moriwake

From: The Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights

Co-Chairs Amy Agbayani and Pat McManaman

The Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights works to achieve equity, justice, inclusion, uphold civil rights, and eliminate discrimination. We stand in **Strong Support of HB2107, HD2, SD1.**

1. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) advises that well-conceived and effectively delivered emergency messages can help ensure public safety, protect property, facilitate response efforts, elicit cooperation, instill public confidence, and help families reunite. FEMA also advises that all public messaging and communication should be accessible to populations with access and function needs and populations with Limited English proficiency (LEP). Yet, in the face of well-established federal, state, and regulatory guidance and laws, the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HiEMA) failed to provide critical language access resources for Lahaina's LEP residents following the issuance of the emergency declaration. Tragically, the State's latest failure mirrors its failures during the COVID-19 emergency.

1. law couldn't be clearer. Section 308 of the Stafford Act requires entities receiving funding from FEMA to create a language access plan that: 1) identifies LEP populations, 2) incorporates those populations into the disaster management planning process, 3) ensures that these populations can access disaster relief information, and 4) develops and maintains a database identifying qualified language access assistance programs that could be activated in an emergency. FEMA also provides guidance, training, and funding to assist state and local government emergency management agencies with these compliance issues.

1. language access coordinator will help to assure that in any future disaster, HiEMA will: 1) have a plan in place, 2) provide interpreters on the ground as needed, 3) translate vital information related to the disaster and, in collaboration with the Governor who is charged with coordinating the public release of information during emergencies, establish websites or other information portals that include English and translated vital information. Other agencies providing supplemental support materials, such as the Departments of Human Services, Health, and Labor would also post their translated documents to the same website as directed by the Governor.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this critically important measure.

HB-2107-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 10:18:19 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2024 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John C Jack Lewin MD	Testifying for Hawaii State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA)	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Honorable Chair Donovan M. Dela Cruz

Honorable Vice Chair Sharon Y. Moriwaki, and

Members:

Testimony of John C (Jack) Lewin MD

Administrator, SHPDA

Regarding: H.B. 2107 SD1 Relating to Disaster Services

Position: SUPPORT

Testimony: This bill would help limited English proficient residents have access to interpreters and other assistance they need during emergencies by having a coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to make sure these services are available, and needs are met.

As we learned painfully in the Maui Wildfire disaster experience, language proficiency is critically important for the health, safety, and well being of those affected. Please fund this bill, as is.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

John C (Jack) Lewin MD, Administrator, SHPDA

HB-2107-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2024 1:58:31 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2024 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerald Ohta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Having people and processes at HIEMA who work to help all persons here when manmade or natural disasters occur regardless of language will improve our ability to respond quickly and compassionately.

HB-2107-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2024 1:58:39 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2024 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Iris Mendoza	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

x

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2107

RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

Hearing Date: April 3, 2024

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB2107, which appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency.

One out of nine people living in Hawaii has limited English proficiency. During disasters, they face disproportionate risks due to challenges in understanding evacuation orders, emergency relief information, and accessing essential services like emergency medical care and shelter assistance. The aftermath of a disaster often brings barriers for individuals with limited English proficiency when applying for state or county programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food assistance programs. The absence of language interpreters at shelters during the August 8, 2023, Maui wildfire underscores the critical

need for a coordinated response. Hawaii's professional and community interpreters filled the void, demonstrating the community's resilience. However, establishing a dedicated Limited English Language Access Coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency will ensure a systematic and planned approach to language access during emergencies.

Language access during emergencies is a right and it should be implemented correctly and professionally. I witnessed many Lahaina fire victims fall through the cracks due to lack of language access and they were not able to obtain valuable resources. Most other states already have this in place, Hawai'i should also.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the successful passage of HB2107.

Thank you for your support and consideration,

Iris Mendoza

HB-2107-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2024 3:16:16 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2024 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means,

I am in strong SUPPORT of HB2107 HD2 SD1. We have learned through the Covid pandemic and Maui wildfires that our residents who have limited English proficiency are most vulnerable in receiving critical information, services, and support. It is our responsibility to ensure that this is addressed now as we prepare for future events and disasters.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2107-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/1/2024 4:02:12 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2024 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB2107, which appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency.

One out of nine people living in Hawaii has limited English proficiency. During disasters, they face disproportionate risks due to challenges in understanding evacuation orders, emergency relief information, and accessing essential services like emergency medical care and shelter assistance. The aftermath of a disaster often brings barriers for individuals with limited English proficiency when applying for state or county programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food assistance programs. The absence of language interpreters at shelters during the August 8, 2023, Maui wildfire underscores the critical need for a coordinated response. Hawaii's professional and community interpreters filled the void, demonstrating the community's resilience. However, establishing a dedicated Limited English Language Access Coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency will ensure a systematic and planned approach to language access during emergencies.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to the successful passage of HB2107.

me ke aloha 'āina,

Nanea Lo, Mō'ili'ili, O'ahu - 96826

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB2107
RELATED TO DISASTER SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair**

Hearing Date: April 3, 2024

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in **support of HB2107**, which appropriates funds to establish the Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator position within the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency.

As a first-generation immigrant, and with many of my family members also being first-generation and Limited English Proficient (LEP), I understand the challenges faced by individuals in our community during times of crisis. After the Lahaina fire, I found myself interpreting for my affected family members so that they could access the resources and assistance they needed. The dissemination of crucial information and updates was only available in English, creating significant barriers for our LEP communities.

It's imperative to recognize that one out of nine people living in Hawaii has limited English proficiency. During disasters, individuals with LEP face disproportionate risks due to difficulties understanding evacuation orders, emergency relief information, and essential services like emergency medical care and shelter assistance. Moreover, the aftermath of a disaster often brings additional hurdles for these individuals when applying for state or county programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food assistance programs.

The absence of language interpreters at shelters during the August 8, 2023, Maui wildfire highlighted the critical need for a coordinated response to language access during emergencies. While Hawaii's professional and community interpreters stepped in admirably, demonstrating the community's resilience, establishing a dedicated Limited English Language Access Coordinator within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency will ensure a systematic and planned approach to addressing language barriers during crises.

In conclusion, I strongly support HB2107 and urge its passage to ensure that all community members, such as my family, can effectively receive critical information and access necessary resources during emergencies.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Maria Rallojaj

HB-2107-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 8:45:51 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2024 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thaddeus Pham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and WAM Committee Members,

As a public health professional and concerned citizen, I write in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB2107 HD2 SD1, which appropriates funds to establish the position of Limited English Proficiency Language Coordinator within the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency.

One out of nine people living in Hawai‘i has limited English proficiency. During disasters, they face disproportionate risks due to challenges in understanding evacuation orders, emergency relief information, and accessing essential services like emergency medical care and shelter assistance. The aftermath of a disaster often brings barriers for individuals with limited English proficiency when applying for state or county programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food assistance programs. The absence of language interpreters at shelters during the August 8, 2023, Maui wildfire underscores the critical need for a coordinated response. Hawai‘i's professional and community interpreters filled the void, demonstrating the community's resilience. However, establishing a dedicated Limited English Language Access Coordinator within the Hawai‘i Emergency Management Agency will ensure a systematic and planned approach to language access during emergencies.

Mahalo for considering this important bill to better protect and serve all communities in Hawai‘i.

Thaddeus Pham (he/him)

LATE

HB-2107-SD-1

Submitted on: 4/2/2024 11:47:07 AM

Testimony for WAM on 4/3/2024 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Austin Haleyalpiy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you all in full support of HB2107. As a child of immigrants, I have been privileged to see how certain situations my parents were in allowed for them to have a better change at life here in the United States. They came out on scholarship to attend 4 year universities which they had english tutors to help them with the language barrier. I have seen firsthand from my other family members and other individuals I come into contact with in the community who come under very different circumstances making the language barrier a consistant barrier to accessing resources, finding work, housing and so on.

We are extremely blessed to be living in the beautiful islands of Hawai'i. A place where the influence of other cultures are so plain to see and feel. So much so that a lot of these influences have become "local culture". I ask that the state seriously considers this meausre to allow for equitable access for LEP communities. I would venture to say that majority of the committee members could have been considered LEP in their ancestry as near as 2 generations back. Let us make our ancestors proud and make a change for the good of all. The social climate is far different than it was 2 generations ago which has made the need for these changes in policy even greater with the advancement and increased use in technology.

Mahalo for allowing me the opportunity to share my own mana'o on this issue. I hope that the committee seriously considers the measure at hand to allow for integrations and the moving forward of our community as a whole.

Thank you,

Austin Haleyalpiy