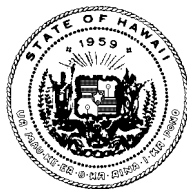


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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
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TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 5, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2752 – RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF ELECTIONS.**

Hearing: February 8, 2024, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the measure's intent and provides comments. DHS defers to the Office of Elections on the impact this proposal may have on its services.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to the Office of Elections Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee to provide mandated voter education and outreach services for individuals with accessibility needs.

DHS recognizes the importance of promoting greater participation in voting by individuals with access needs who may otherwise be excluded, including the removal of barriers for persons with voting accessibility needs to ensure that all individuals have equal access to the voting process. DHS supports the intent of this measure to fund the Advisory Committee's activities.

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

SB-2381

Submitted on: 2/1/2024 2:54:23 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/6/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jotis Russell-Christian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Money has dominated Hawaii's political system for too long, leading to bad policies being passed and good ones being killed. SB2381 can break the link between private money and winning elections by freeing candidates from the need to fundraise from wealthy donors and special interests. This can lead to a more ethical and representative government that prioritizes the needs of constituents. Connecticut, Maine, and Hawaii County Council have proven that full publicly financed elections can be successful and cost-effective. These examples haven't resulted in incumbents losing at higher rates or the majority parties losing seat, but it has resulted in shifts in how the sitting legislators are influenced. We can easily afford this program's low cost of less than \$10 million per year. If we are serious about ending corruption and creating a system that works for all residents and not just the wealthy few, we need to pass SB2381 now.

SB-2752

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 3:57:29 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/8/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
james gashel	Testifying for Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony of James Gashel

Joint hearing:

Committee on Judiciary (JDC), and

Committee on Health and Human Services (HHS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2024

February 8, 2024, 10:00 AM, hearing on SB2752

Good morning chairs, vice chairs, and members. I am James Gashel, Vice Chair of the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, proudly supporting SB2752. Thank you for scheduling this hearing.

The purpose of SB2752 is to appropriate funds to the Office of Elections to be used by the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee in carrying out its duties. The legislature created the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee and comparable county committees as enacted in sections 11-10.5 and 11-10.6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, passed in 2021.

These committees are to advise election offices on barriers to access for persons with disabilities and ways to remove them. The goal is to promote greater participation in voting by persons with access needs who may otherwise be overlooked.

Federal law, called the Help America Vote Act, says voters with disabilities, such as blindness, have the right to vote privately and independently. Hawaii is a vote by mail state, so ballots are sent out in standard print to everyone. Being blind, how can I vote privately and independently if I just get a ballot in standard print? It's questions like this that our statewide committee helps the Office of Elections to understand and address.

Our statewide accessibility needs advisory committee has the challenge of being in touch with voters with disabilities in all parts of the state, including on the neighbor islands, where voter service centers, what used to be called polling places, are few and far between. This lack of polling places presents unique challenges to some voters with access needs.

Therefore, the Statewide Committee is really the voice of voters with disabilities, expected to play a crucial role in ensuring that persons with accessibility needs have equal access to participate fully in the voting process. To support this work, SB2752 seeks a modest appropriation for information gathering, outreach, and voter education activities conducted by the statewide committee.

The Committee recommends \$10,000 to be appropriated in fiscal year 2024-2025 for this purpose. This appropriation will serve as a critical step towards achieving greater inclusivity for citizens with voting accessibility needs in the electoral process, aligning with the principles of equal representation and access to the democratic rights of all citizens.

If approved, the appropriation made in SB2752 will be dedicated for exclusive use by the accessibility needs advisory committee, not intended to be a general increase in the Office of Elections baseline budget. Information gathering, outreach, and voter education activities, focusing on accessibility needs will have particular importance as we prepare for the 2024 fall election and find better ways to meet accessibility needs in the future.

Please move this bill forward to affirm the value of this statewide committee's work. Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2752

Submitted on: 1/31/2024 3:52:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/8/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Justin Silva	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for the statewide elections accessibility needs advisory committee for information gathering, outreach, and voter education expenses approved by the committee; provided that any funds appropriated pursuant to this Act shall be in addition to and shall not supplant any portion of the base budget of the office of elections.

SB-2752

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:55:06 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/8/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia A. Morrissey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 8, 2024

Testimony on SB 2752:

related to obtaining a targeted appropriation for

the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

Submitted by: Patricia Morrissey, PhD

Chair of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

To: The Hawaii Senate Committees on the Judiciary and Health and Human Services

Chairmen Rhoads and Gabbard, and Committee Members:

I very strongly support SB 2752. The purpose of SB 2752 is to establish a specific appropriation for the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. This Committee is administratively housed under the State Office of Elections. However, there are no funds specifically designated for use or control by the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. If we had designated funding, we could proactively engage in increasing the accessibility for voters with disabilities to the entire voting process, from registration through casting ballots. With the exception of one online survey of voters with disabilities conducted in 2023, which I financed personally, the Committee has not undertaken any activities requiring expenditure of funds. With targeted funding we would be able to assist County Elections

Accessibility Advisory Committees with information gathering, outreach, and voter education. My colleagues and I recommend an appropriation of \$10,000 for fiscal year 2024-2025.

According to the CDC, 20 percent of the voting population in Hawaii has a disability. We do not have specific data about how many of this percentage voted in past elections. But from the survey we conducted last year, even with the mail-in ballot option, voters with disabilities in Hawaii still faced challenges. The Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee invested substantial time last year in learning about and advising the State Office of Elections on simplification of a verification process related to electronic ballot submission. This year we would like to spend time educating voters with disabilities about the entire process connected to voting; providing advice on drafting charter amendments to make them easy to understand; and providing training to staff at voting centers on procedures and policies that ensure that voting in person is not a challenge for a person with a disability.

I wish to especially thank Chairman Rhoads for introducing legislation that created the Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. I am pleased that the companion legislation in the House for an appropriation for this committee is moving quickly with broad support. I greatly appreciate everyone's interest, attention, support, and timely action.

Thank you for this opportunity.

March 20, 2022

Testimony of Eleanor Macdonald
Submitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee

Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Honorable Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice-Chair

Re: SB 2752, RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF ELECTIONS

Dear Chairperson Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard and Members,

I would like to support SB 2752, Relating to the Office of Elections.

This legislation will provide the necessary funds to the Office of Elections to reach out to members of the community on a statewide basis who are unable to understand the process of registration or scoring of a ballot due to language barriers or a physical or mental disability. This could provide the Office of Elections to employ bilingual individuals with spoken or American Sign Language skills to personally contact people of minority populations.

Please support this important legislation and include an effective date for January 1, 2025.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Eleanor Macdonald

SB-2752

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 6:54:05 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/8/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kay Naquin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

February 7, 2024

Testimony of Kay Naquin

Submitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: SB 2752, RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF ELECTIONS

Dear Chairperson Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard and Members,

I would like to support SB 2752, Relating to the Office of Elections.

This could provide the Office of Elections to employ bilingual individuals with spoken or American Sign Language skills to personally contact people of minority populations who may be unfamiliar with the procedures for registration and voting.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kay Naquin