
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 and information
6 from emergency relief providers and impediments that slow access
7 to emergency medical care, sheltering assistance, and other
8 forms of emergency relief. Moreover, in the aftermath of a
9 disaster, many limited English proficient persons encounter
10 barriers to obtaining relief when applying for state or county
11 programs, including financial, medical, housing, and food
12 assistance 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 and
8 federal language access laws and regulations, section 308 of the
9 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act (Stafford
10 Act, P.L. 93-288, as amended) specifically requires entities
11 receiving funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency
12 to identify limited English proficient populations to ensure
13 that they are incorporated into the disaster management planning
14 process; ensure that such populations can access disaster relief
15 information; and develop and maintain a database identifying
16 qualified language assistance programs that could be activated
17 in an emergency.

18 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to
19 establish limited English proficiency language access
20 coordinators within 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 full-time equivalent (FTE)
 20 limited English proficiency language access coordinators within
 21 the Hawaii emergency 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, 2042.



Report Title:

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

Description:

Appropriates funds to establish Limited English Proficiency Language Access Coordinator positions within the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Takes effect 7/1/2042. (SD1)

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