
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



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



1 convene a Stakeholder Working Group to make recommendations to
2 enhance meaningful access to health care in the State through
3 the provision of language assistance services; and
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5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is
6 requested to invite stakeholders, including health care
7 providers, insurers, representatives of community-based
8 organizations, language service providers, and the Healthcare
9 Association of Hawaii, to participate in the Stakeholder Working
10 Group; and
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12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Stakeholder Working Group
13 is requested to:
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- 15 (1) Study and assess language access in health care
16 settings across the State and on each island in the
17 State, including but not limited to:
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- 19 (A) Experiences of LEP populations using language
20 assistance services;
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 - 22 (B) Existing language assistance services and
23 workforce;
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 - 25 (C) Disparities faced by LEP individuals in access to
26 health care;
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 - 28 (D) Practice of using family members and friends as
29 interpreters in health care settings;
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 - 31 (E) Availability of interpreters; and
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 - 33 (F) Requirements for providing interpretation
34 services in medical and health care settings; and
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- 36 (2) Make recommendations to enhance meaningful access to
37 health care in the State for individuals requiring
38 language assistance services; and
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40 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health is
41 requested to submit a report of the Stakeholder Working Group's
42 study, findings, and recommendations, including any proposed



1 legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior
2 to the convening of the Regular Session of 2025; and

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

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