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# SENATE 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

9  
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

15  
16 WHEREAS, in Hawaii, 25.9 percent of persons aged five years  
17 and older speak a language other than English at home; and

18  
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

24  
25 WHEREAS, the August 2023 Maui wildfires increased the need  
26 for accessible health care services, particularly for LEP  
27 individuals; and

28  
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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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  
20

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  
26

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 Senate of the Thirty-second  
40 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2024,  
41 that the Department of Health is requested to convene a  
42 Stakeholder Working Group to make recommendations to enhance



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

3  
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

9  
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:  
16  
17 (A) Experiences of LEP populations using language  
18 assistance services;  
19  
20 (B) Existing language assistance services and  
21 workforce;  
22  
23 (C) Disparities faced by LEP individuals in access to  
24 health care;  
25  
26 (D) Practice of using family members and friends as  
27 interpreters in health care settings;  
28  
29 (E) Availability of interpreters; and  
30  
31 (F) Requirements for providing interpretation  
32 services in medical and health care settings; and  
33  
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



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

OFFERED BY: 

