



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
March 19, 2024

The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary
The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura,
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Rhoads, Senator San Buenaventura, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB1976 HD1 RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF ELECTIONS

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB1976 HD1**, which requires the Office of Elections to annually request funding for the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. Appropriates funds to the Office of Elections Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee to gather information and provide outreach and voter education services for individuals with accessibility needs.

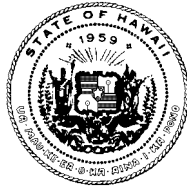
The committee is under the State Office of Elections however, there was no funding designated for the committee's use or control. Without funding, they cannot be proactive in increasing the accessibility for voters with disabilities through the entire voting process, from registration through casting ballots.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local governments and their election officials to ensure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote in all elections. This includes federal, state, and local elections. And it includes all parts of voting, like voter registration, selecting a location for polling places, and voting, whether on election day or during an early or absentee voting process. We appreciate the creation of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, to meet this ADA requirement. By funding the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, will help our state toward compliance of this ADA requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB1976 HD1**.

Sincerely,
Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

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

March 18, 2024

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

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

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB1976 HD1 – RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF ELECTIONS.**

Hearing: March 19, 2024, 9:55 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 implementation of this measure and respectfully requests that the appropriation not replace or reduce budget priorities identified in the executive budget.

PURPOSE: This bill requires the Office of Elections to annually request funding for the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. Appropriates funds to the Office of Elections Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee to gather information and provide outreach and voter education services for individuals with accessibility needs. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs (HD1) amended the measure by:

- (1) Codifying the requirement that the Office of Elections annually request funding for the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee in the Hawaii Revised Statutes;
- (2) Changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion; and
- (3) Making technical, nonsubstantive amendments for the purposes of clarity, consistency, and style.

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.



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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March 19, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON JUDICIARY AND ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

House Bill 1976 HD1 – Relating to the Office of Elections

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) supports House Bill 1976 HD1 – Relating to the Office of Elections.

This bill requires the Office of Elections to annually request funding for the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee and appropriates funds to the Office of Elections Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee to gather information and provide outreach and voter education services for individuals with accessibility needs.

The establishment of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee was an important step towards ensuring people with disabilities are able to participate in voting. However, to successfully fulfill its mandate the Committee requires proper funding for outreach services.

Thank you for considering our position.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

HB-1976-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 8:16:34 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/19/2024 9:55:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support.

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

March 19, 2024, 9:55 AM, hearing on HB1976 H.D. 1

Aloha chairs, vice chairs, and members. I am James Gashel, Vice Chair of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, proudly supporting HB1976 H.D. 1, which you last considered as SB2752 on February 8. Thank you for scheduling this hearing.

The purposes of HB1976 as amended in H.D. 1 are to:

- (1) Require the Office of Elections to annually request funding for the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee; and
- (2) Appropriate funds to the Office of Elections for the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee to carry out its mandate.

The legislature created the Statewide Elections 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, formerly 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, HB1976 H.D. 1 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 sought in HB1976 H.D. 1 will be dedicated for exclusive use by the Statewide Elections 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.

HB-1976-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 12:45:02 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/19/2024 9:55:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaili	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

i am in strong support of this hb1976 please pass this measure so people with disability can vote.

HB-1976-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 6:13:57 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/19/2024 9:55:00 AM

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

Comments:

March 19, 2024

Testimony on HB 1976, HD1:

Related to 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

On Behalf of the Committee

To: The Hawaii Senate Committee on the Judiciary

and

Committee on Health and Human Services

Chair Rhoads, Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members:

I am writing as Chair of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. I greatly appreciate your holding this hearing on HB 1976, HD1.

The purpose of this legislation is to appropriate funds to the Office of Elections to be used exclusively by the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee in carrying out its duties. In 2021, as you know, Chairman Rhoads introduced this legislation to create the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee and comparable county committees. The Governor signed it into law.

The Statewide Committee, the voice of voters with disabilities, is 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, HB 1976, HD1 seeks a modest but needed appropriation for information gathering, outreach, and education activities to further the Committee's work.

Especially important to the Committee is facilitating participation by people with disabilities — assisting and supporting registration and voting, including the online options; educating poll workers on how to assist people with disabilities voting in person, including easy and quick access to accessible voting equipment; educating people with disabilities about ballots, including the purpose of charter amendments; preparing materials in accessible formats; and helping the mayors' offices on Maui establish a parallel committee to our Committee. There are functioning county level committees on Oahu and Kauai, and recently the Big Island. Arranging for and conducting these various activities require time, travel, access to expertise, and other resources that come with costs. These costs are beyond what the Office of Elections can absorb with ease in a timely manner. Committee members, at no charge to the state for time, are willing to facilitate and coordinate these activities. Committee members could travel to all island counties to advise and support county committees; oversee drafting of relevant educational materials; work with appropriate organizations to coordinate training, organize volunteers, survey voters with disabilities on their voting experiences this year, and provide feedback to the Legislature and Governor.

We all value informed, invested voters. People with disabilities are a key constituency in the State. Their informed vote and perspectives provide benefits to the state economically and socially in tourism, employment, education, health care, transportation, and more.

In 2021-2022 the Statewide Committee created and conducted a survey of voters with disabilities. I personally financed that. The survey gave a sense of the scope of accessibility needs people with disabilities had experienced and wanted addressed. A modest \$10,000 budget

dedicated to the Committee's work would allow us to tackle these identified needs. Hawaii is at the forefront of states that have formed structures to address election accessibility issues. Through a partial search on the web, other than Hawaii, California may be the only state, with state and county level committees to directly address voting accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Voters with disabilities will value your being a champion on this modest request.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Patricia Morrissey, Chair

Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

Cell:703.405.0925

[Email: patmor@aol.com](mailto:patmor@aol.com)

HB-1976-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 6:51:30 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/19/2024 9:55:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sherry Shimizu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Honorables Senator Rhoads (Chair), Senator Gabbard (Vice Chair) and Members of the Judiciary committee (JDC); Senator San Buenaventura (Chair), Senator Aquino (Vice Chair) and Members of the Health and Human Services committee (HHS):

I am testifying today in support of HB1976 HD1 in order to assure voter funds are appropriated for people with accessibility needs, so your constituents can access the polls and vote for you.

Thank you for your consideration and sincerely,

Sherry Shimizu

Oahu

Testimony of Katie Keim

Committee on Judiciary (JDC) - Committee on Health and Human Services (HHS)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-second Legislature, regular session of 2024

March 19, 2024, 9:55 AM, HB1976 H.D. 1

RE: Appropriation for The Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

Good morning, Chair Rhoads, Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members:

Mahalo for hearing my testimony. My name is Katie Keim, a blind business woman and member of the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee. I am in strong support of HB1976 H.D. 1.

The purpose of HB1976 H.D. 1 is to appropriate funds to be used by the Statewide Voters with Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee in executing its duties as introduced by Senator Rhoades in 2021 and signed into law by the Governor.

Through HB1976 H.D. 1 The Statewide Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee requests a modest, yet much needed appropriation for the fiscal year 2024-2025.

The state office of elections has no budget for the committee's important outreach and education work to be executed. These funds would not be an addition to the state office of elections general budget, rather specifically designated to and used by the committee ensuring the committee's work is conducted in its fullest capacity, reaching individuals with disabilities throughout the state of Hawaii, conducting outreach and education of our accessible elections process.

The committee is the voice of individuals with disability needs for their access to an independent and private casting of their vote, a critical role throughout Hawaii ensuring that persons with accessibility needs have equal access to participate fully in the voting process.

Mahalo for your recognition of the statewide committee's value in its important work by moving this bill forward.

Related to a targeted Submitted by: Patricia Morrissey, PhD

Chair of the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee

On Behalf of the Committee

Chair Rhoads, Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members:

HB-1976-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 10:21:10 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/19/2024 9:55:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eleanor Macdonald	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of this bill to request annual funding for the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee to gather information and provide outreach to people with disabilities and special needs to participate in local and national elections. It would be important to consider their communication needs when reaching out to these communities such as the need for an American Sign Language interpreter or speech amplification or the use of touch to understand what is being said. This ensures full participation in the democratic process.

Please pass this critical bill.

HB-1976-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 3:18:30 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/19/2024 9:55:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James Labrie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill to fund the Statewide Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee because the committee is specifically working toward bringing equity around voting and privacy to people with disabilities. Often times privacy is a barrier for people with disabilities. When I have gone to vote in person I needed some one to come with me which made me uncomfortable because I didn't know what their political opinions were. This committees purpose is to improve ways of enhancing privacy options for people with disabilities.