



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**
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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Wednesday, February 5, 2025
10:00AM
State Capitol, Conference Room #423

In consideration of
HB935
RELATING TO DIGITAL EQUITY.

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey and members of the Committee. The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) provides the following comments on HB935 that establishes and appropriates fund for a digital navigator pilot program to offer technical assistance with computers and electronic devices to residents.

Hawaii Broadband and Digital Equity Office plays a crucial role in advancing the digital navigator work. The Hawaii Digital Equity Plan addresses the community need for devices, internet access, and digital skills training, which will rely on a network of digital navigators—individuals who help communities with access and effective use of digital technology.

We estimate \$100,000 in appropriation for the two-year pilot project for operational needs to include a temporary position hire, travel, advertising, and other operational costs. We ask that the appropriation be added to the general fund line item as opposed to the special fund for the pilot program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
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February 5, 2025

The Honorable Representative Greggor Ilagan, Chair
House Economic Development and Technology
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Ilagan, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB935 Relating to Digital Equity

The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities **SUPPORTS HB935**, which establishes and appropriates funds for a digital navigator pilot program to offer technical assistance with computers and electronic devices to residents.

Access to digital technology and reliable internet services is critical for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to live independently, engage with their communities, and access essential services. Digital equity is not merely about having access to devices and internet connectivity; it also encompasses the skills and support needed to use technology effectively. With its proposed locations across Oahu, Hawaii Island, Kauai, and Maui, this pilot program ensures that individuals in both urban and rural areas can receive the technical assistance necessary to bridge the digital gap.

The I/DD community relies heavily on telehealth services, virtual meetings, online education, and digital platforms to access government programs and participate in civic activities. This reliance underscores the importance of having knowledgeable digital navigators available to assist with troubleshooting, digital literacy, and technology training. This bill represents a meaningful step towards ensuring that all residents of Hawai'i, regardless of ability or geographic location, have the tools and support they need to thrive in our increasingly digital world.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB935**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Economic Development and Technology
Wednesday, February 05, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

By

Garret T. Yoshimi, Vice President for Information Technology/Chief Information Officer
University of Hawai'i System

HB 935 – RELATING TO DIGITAL EQUITY

Chair Ilagan, Vice Chair Hussey, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i, representing the interests of the State in the implementation of federally funded broadband investments, supports the intent of HB 935 to establish and fund a digital navigator pilot program to offer technical assistance with computers and electronic devices to residents. Support to grow the digital literacy and readiness for all of Hawai'i's residents is key to the Connect Kakou statewide initiative.

The current plan for the state's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, includes funding to initiate and deploy, a statewide Community Digital Navigator program, in partnership with the Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS). The program is in its startup phase now, and we anticipate initial services being available from an initial set of HSPLS branches before the end of the calendar year.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 935.

Testimony of Sean McLaughlin
Hawai'i House Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Wednesday February 5, 2025 at 10:00am

Supporting HB935 - "Relating to Digital Equity"

Thank you for this opportunity to share testimony supporting HB935. I support and hope you will amend the measure to highlight the State's need for digital literacy, consumer education and public interest advocacy to achieve digital equity for the Islands.

HB935 proposes to support "digital navigator" services statewide, though the islands of Molokai and Lanai are not included as they should be. By partnering with the State Library, each island can have at least one point of presence for digital equity efforts with up to fifty sites statewide.

Clearly, consumer education is needed to ensure that State agencies effectively protect consumers and engage local resources to address community needs. Digital navigators can support a healthy information ecosystem, increase digital literacy, and ensure that public interests are understood.

Through these pilot efforts, the State can thoughtfully listen and consider local information needs that are not met by the commercial marketplace, including: public health & safety; education; community based economic development; culture & arts; and, civic engagement.

If the proposed "digital navigator" services are matched with information literacy, consumer education and public interest advocacy, this measure could go far to address the lack of information equity across platforms and the digital divide.

Thanks for your thoughtful consideration of this testimony and please feel free to contact me if you would like more information or perspective on this issue.

Sean McLaughlin
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