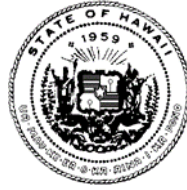


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KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
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TRISTA SPEER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

February 6, 2025

TO: The Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1100 – RELATING TO ACT 253, SESSIONAL LAWS OF HAWAII 2023.**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 9:45 a.m.  
Conference Room 329 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this administration measure and provides comments.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to update the name of the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program established by Act 253, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023, by replacing the term "visually impaired" with "low vision" and clarifies the pilot program's implementation timeframes. Sunsets 06/30/2029.

Act 253, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023 (Act 253), established the Neighbor Islands Blind and Visually Impaired Service Pilot Program within the Department of Human Services. The goal of Act 253 is to bridge the gaps in services for blind and low vision residents across the State, particularly focusing on those living on the neighbor islands. DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's (DVR) efforts to implement the Act were delayed until July 2024 as the staff were responding to the needs of staff and residents impacted by the August 2023 Maui wildfires.

Despite the delays, DVR engaged a consultant, posted a survey, and had several in-person and virtual meetings to gather information from blind and low vision neighbor island residents to discuss potential training and services that the pilot program may offer. A report to the legislature was submitted in December 2024 detailing DVR's efforts, findings, and recommendations of the working group that include requests for two additional temporary full-time equivalent positions within the department and appropriations to implement the pilot program. The report to the legislature may be found at [https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Ryamane\\_Act-253-2023\\_Neighbor-Island-Blind-Low-Vision-Pilot-Program.pdf](https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Ryamane_Act-253-2023_Neighbor-Island-Blind-Low-Vision-Pilot-Program.pdf).

This bill will allow DVR to continue to implement the pilot program. If successful, DVR will extend and supplement the existing services provided by the Ho`opono Services for the Blind Branch of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The services, envisioned by Act 253 and recommended by the working group, will include: peer-to-peer outreach, sight loss adjustment, peer counseling support, transportation, technology access, enrichment activities, workforce development, mobility training, advocacy training, and other services. These services will support participants' goals to become and sustain their independence and improve their social integration. The pilot program would not require the participant to be seeking employment, though the skills gained would contribute to the participant's employability. The pilot program aims to serve 150 individuals in the first year (SFY 26) and 250 individuals in the second year (SFY 27).

For the state fiscal biennium 25-27, to implement the pilot program, State-funded positions are requested as DVR's current federal grant requirements do not allow the provision of services to individuals ineligible for Ho`opono's existing programs. Ho`opono's federal funding requires the participant to be seeking employment. DVR's Ho`opono program will need one (1.00) FTE Program Specialist IV and one (1.00) FTE Administrative Assistant II for a total of \$193,230 in general funds for each year of the biennium. Additional general funds are required for Implementation Support (\$70,000), Program Costs and Supplies (\$85,000), Contracted Providers of Services (\$1,625,000), Assistive Technology (\$325,000), and Travel (\$8,624) for a total of \$2,113,824 over the biennium.

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Of note, the administration initially thought an appropriation request through a Governor's message (GM) would be forthcoming to fund this pilot program. However, due to the priorities of the federal administration, at this time, it is uncertain whether a GM will be made to insert the appropriation into the budget. As the bill moves forward, we will update the Legislature on the necessary appropriation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of this measure.

Testimony of National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii (NFBH)

submitted by Katie Keim

Committee on Human Services & Homelessness (HSH)

Thirty-third legislature, 2025 regular session

February 11, 2025, 9:45 am, hearing on HB1100, Conference Room 329

Good morning, Chair, Vice Chair, and committee members. My name is Katie Keim testifying for the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, (NFBH), supporting HB1100, RELATING TO ACT 253, which established the neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program within the Department of Human Services.

The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii supports the amendments replacing the term "visually impaired" with the term "low vision" and clarifying the pilot program's implementation timeframes.

The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii is an affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind, which is the oldest and largest organized movement of blind Americans. The NFB nationally has established the term "low vision" as the respected standard language adopted. HB1100 amendment is in line with our national resolution.

The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii stands in support of HB1100 amendments and Act 253 important program to serve our neighbor island blind and low vision residents. Mahalo for hearing HB1100 and moving it forward this session.

**HB-1100**

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:29:22 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/11/2025 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Aaron Gray	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Gabbard, Lee, and Keohokalole, Vice Chairs Richards, Inouye, Fukunaga, and Members of the Committees,

My name is Alika Gray, and I am a concerned O‘ahu resident writing comments about SB1100, relating to biosecurity. I am particularly concerned that this bill would move the Invasive Species Council from the Department of Land and Natural Resources to the Department of Agriculture and Biosecurity (currently named the Department of Agriculture).

This concerns me because:

- Managing invasive species and biosecurity is too big for any one department. Coordinating resources and responsibilities across multiple Departments is a more successful approach, just like the approach of the New Zealand government.
- The Invasive Species Council and the Department of Land and Natural Resources have successfully raised millions in federal funds for biosecurity and invasive species management.
- On the contrary, the Department of Agriculture has had problems filling critical positions, spending funds quickly for time sensitive projects, obtaining federal funds, retaining leadership, and coordinating with other invasive species and biosecurity organizations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB1100.

Mahalo,

Alika Gray

# PETER L. FRITZ

Attorney at Law

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EMAIL: [PLFLEGIS@FRITZHO.COM](mailto:PLFLEGIS@FRITZHO.COM)

Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

The Honorable Lisa Marten, Chair

The Honorable Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

RE: **Testimony in Support of HB 1100 - What's in a name?**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Fritz. I **support** this bill because it uses the term “low vision” and does not use the outdated and offensive term “vision impaired.” I am hard of hearing, I am not hearing impaired or damaged.

**What's in a name? Plenty! Words and labels can have a profound effect on people. The change advocated by this bill shows respect for people by refusing to use outdated or offensive terms.**

**Impaired** – Using ***impaired*** along with visually, hearing, mobility, and so-on, is negative. Impaired focuses on what people can't do. It establishes the standard as “hearing” or “vision” and anything different as “impaired,” or substandard, hindered, or damaged. **Impaired implies that something is not as it should be and ought to be fixed if possible.**

I am hard of hearing not hearing impaired. The people covered by this bill are low vision, not vision impaired.

I respectfully request that the committee passed and move this bill forward to change the name of the program to low vision. I also respectfully request that the legislature ask the LRB to submit a report about updating the Hawaii Revised Statutes to replace the term impaired, when the term is used in connection with a disability with the appropriate updated and non offensive term.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

February 11, 2025

Testimony of Eleanor Macdonald

Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Honorable Representative Lisa Marten, Chair  
Honorable Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

Dear Rep. Marten, Chair, Rep. Olds, Vice Chair and Members,

I would like to strongly support this bill that recommends the removal of the term “visually impaired” in the title of this exciting pilot program and replace “impaired” with Blind and Low Vision.

For many years now, there has been general usage of the term “Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired.” According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, the definition of “impaired” means “to diminish in function, ability or quality.” When using this word to describe a person, it implies that the person is “diminished in function, ability or quality” when in fact a person who is blind or has low vision and a person who is deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind implies these individuals are unable to function, not have the same ability or are of lower quality than people in general.

I would like to offer an amendment to discontinue the use of the word “impaired” in general when referring to people who are blind/low vision and people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind.

Mahalo,

Sincerely,

Eleanor E. Macdonald, M.Ed. CRC (ret.)

Testimony of Virgil Stinnett

Committee on Human Services & Homelessness (HSH)

Thirty-third legislature, 2025 regular session

February 11, 2025, 9:45 am, hearing on HB1001, Conference Room 329

Good morning, Chair, Vice Chair, and committee members. My name is Virgil Stinnett, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, (NFBH), supporting HB1100, RELATING TO ACT 253, which established the neighbor islands blind and visually impaired service pilot program within the Department of Human Services.

I stand in support of the testimony submitted by The National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii supporting the amendments replacing the term "visually impaired" with the term "low vision" and clarifying the pilot program's implementation timeframes.

Mahalo for hearing HB1100 and moving it forward this session.