

ACT 246

H.B. NO. 834

A Bill for an Act Relating to American Sign Language.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that at least a dozen states have enacted laws that recognize American Sign Language, or ASL, as a distinct language with its own rules, structure, and cultural heritage. Act 152, Session Laws of Hawaii 2016, which recognizes ASL as a world language for public school language requirement purposes, was an important first step, and this Act aims to advance the understanding and acknowledgment that ASL is a distinct language and not merely signed English.

The purpose of this Act is to recognize ASL as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.

SECTION 2. Chapter 1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“§1- American Sign Language. American Sign Language is recognized as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with its own distinct grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and cultural heritage.”

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 4 This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved July 7, 2023.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.