

ACT 204

S.B. NO. 3290

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 American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters provide a critical service to deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and hearing individuals, and to public agencies in the State, that wish to effectively communicate with each other in a variety of settings and circumstances. Despite the increase in requests for ASL interpreting services, there has been increased difficulty in the recruitment of individuals who are qualified to serve as ASL interpreters.

The legislature further finds that there remains a critical need to develop an ASL interpreter workforce and that acquiring additional information on the current condition of ASL interpreting in Hawaii would help provide a firm foundation to ensure greater access for individuals to receive ASL interpretation services in the State during emergencies and daily life activities and address other current and future issues relating to this critical service.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the disability and communication access board to convene a working group to study the state of American Sign Language interpretation services in Hawaii.

SECTION 2. (a) The disability and communication access board shall convene a working group to:

- (1) Study the state of American Sign Language interpretation services in Hawaii; and
 - (2) Investigate and study any means, methods, processes, or systems that might improve the provision of American Sign Language interpretation services in the State.
- (b) The working group shall consist of the following members:
- (1) A representative from the disability and communication access board, who shall serve as chairperson of the working group;
 - (2) A representative from the department of human services division of vocational rehabilitation;
 - (3) A representative from the department of education;

ACT 204

- (4) A professor from the university of Hawaii who teaches American Sign Language;
 - (5) A member of the deaf and blind task force;
 - (6) An individual who currently serves as an American Sign Language interpreter, who shall be invited by the chairperson of the working group; and
 - (7) Any additional members deemed necessary by the chairperson of the working group.
- (c) The working group, with the assistance of the department of health, shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than December 31, 2024.
- (d) The working group shall be dissolved on June 30, 2025.
- (e) The invited members of the working group shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred, including travel expenses.
- (f) No member of the working group shall be made subject to chapter 84, Hawaii Revised Statutes, solely because of that member's participation as a member of the working group.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved July 5, 2024.)