



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee of Government Operations
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HCR 108 HD1 – URGING THE STATE TO ADDRESS THE LACK OF LANGUAGE SUPPORT IN SERVICES, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES OFFERED BY STATE GOVERNMENT FOR PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY.

Chair Kim, Vice Chair Ruderman, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports House Concurrent Resolution 108 HD1.

I am a professor and administrator in the College of Languages, Linguistics, and Literature at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. As a U.S. citizen who immigrated to Hawai'i as well as an educator and scholar in the field of language education, I would like to express my full support for HCR 108.

The United States needs bilingual and biliterate citizens who are equipped with expert knowledge about other cultures and societies. These skills are not only necessary for conducting U.S. overseas diplomacy, but also are critical skills in the current global economy. In this era of globalization and increasing interdependence in the international community, HCR 108 makes a great deal of sense, especially in states like Hawai'i where one out of four residents speak a language other than English at home. HCR 108 will not only capitalize on and validate the rich linguistic and cultural resources that school-age children from multilingual families bring to classrooms, but also motivate students from English-speaking families to pursue an invaluable skill to prepare themselves for their future academic and professional careers.

For the past 30 years, I have taught and advised hundreds of UHM students who are working towards advancing their bilingual/biliterate skills in order to achieve their goals and dreams in personal, local, and global contexts. These students also perceive the opportunity structures of the society positively, and want to get ahead in the world and become responsible citizens. They value education, communities, and societies that affirm and promote linguistic and cultural diversity.

The impact of this bill on future generations will be enormous.