



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Human Services  
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by

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SCR 135      REQUESTING A STUDY ON THE AVAILABILITY OF AMERICAN SIGN  
LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Ihara and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i-Kapi'olani Community College (UH-KCC) fully supports the intent of SCR 135. Despite numerous concerted efforts to increase the number of qualified American Sign Language/English interpreters, their limited availability in the State of Hawai'i and across the nation remains a critical issue.

In 2000, Jan Fried, program coordinator for the American Sign Language/Interpreter Education program, and Nancy Bridenbaugh, director of the Gallaudet University Regional Center and I participated in discussions that culminated in the report, "Shortage of ASL-English Interpreters in the State of Hawai'i". As a result of that study and receipt of a US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs grant, the College established an Associate of Science degree in Interpreting: Educational and a Certificate of Completion in Interpreting. UH-KCC is firmly committed to supporting the communication needs of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing communities by preparing individuals for careers in interpreting.

While the number of qualified and credentialed interpreters has dramatically increased in K-12 settings, the numbers available to work with Deaf adults has steadily declined over the last several years. This decline can be attributed to several factors and, as such, this may be the opportune time for the Legislative Reference Bureau to survey working ASL/English interpreters and conduct a comprehensive study about this matter. Recently, the American Sign Language/Interpreter Education program has once again participated in focus group discussions to address the acute shortage of qualified interpreters who work as private contractors.

Kapi'olani Community College will fully cooperate with the Legislative Reference Bureau during the study and consult with them to formulate recommendations that can result in the increase of qualified American Sign Language/English interpreters.