



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committees on Education,
and Higher Education

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by

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HCR 296/HR 231 REQUESTING THAT SIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION BE
COORDINATED

Chairs Takumi, Waters, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i Community Colleges supports the general intent of HCR 296/HR 231 and this testimony focuses on sections that directly pertain to American Sign Language (ASL).

Children with disabilities who can benefit from exposure to sign language and sign supported speech ideally should have access to educational personnel and direct service providers who can communicate in sign language. Early intervention specialists, speech language pathologists, parents, and siblings of children with disabilities, service providers, health care professionals, teachers and educational paraprofessionals can benefit from having a basic knowledge of ASL. Such knowledge would allow these professionals to communicate with a variety of individuals who may be deaf or disabled. Kapi'olani Community College (CC) welcomes service providers and pre-service students to take ASL and supports the related schools and departments at UH Mānoa to encourage their students to take ASL as an elective. These groups can be specifically targeted and recruited by the Kapi'olani CC to study ASL in its continuing education or credit programs.

Kapi'olani CC houses the American Sign Language/Interpreter Education program and provides ASL courses to all the campuses within the UH System. This program also offers customized training in ASL to agencies and organizations throughout the State. For example, the DOE's Honolulu School District has previously contracted with Kapi'olani CC to provide ASL instruction for their special and regular education teachers. Educational Paraprofessionals are graduated from Kapi'olani CC who have specific training and ASL proficiency to work with deaf and hard of hearing children. These graduates are also qualified to apply their knowledge and language proficiency with special needs children who are also not deaf. The Kapi'olani Deaf Center at Kapi'olani CC has a myriad of materials in video and digital formats that are about ASL or produced in ASL. Information about literacy strategies, ASL mentors, sign language

HCR 296/HR 231

for parents and children, evaluating ASL proficiency and effective communication methods are also available. The Master's degree program in Deaf Education at UH Mānoa is another valuable resource.

Kapi'olani CC can provide numerous avenues to study ASL for those who work or plan to work with children who are disabled. However, should this resolution lead to mandating some level of ASL proficiency for all educational personnel and service providers who work with special needs children, then additional financial resources for Kapi'olani would be required.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HCR 296/HR 231.