WHEREAS, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters work as freelance interpreters to provide communication access between hearing and deaf or hard of hearing individuals; and

WHEREAS, the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division of the Department of Human Services and the Disability and Communication Access Board prepared a report entitled "Shortage of ASL-English Interpreters in the State of Hawaii" in November 2000; and

WHEREAS, the 2000 report identified job security, consistency of income, stability of schedule, benefits, and professional development as priorities for working interpreters; and

WHEREAS, the 2000 report recommended increasing the pool of qualified interpreters in Hawaii to improve communication access for deaf and hard of hearing persons; and

WHEREAS, the Disability and Communication Access Board is a state agency that issues administrative rules for the utilization of communication access services (e.g., sign language interpreters, real-time captioners, and computer-assisted notetakers) and determines the qualifications of interpreters and the credentialing of interpreters who do not hold national certification via a state screening process; and

WHEREAS, the Disability and Communication Access Board has developed and implements a state test, the Hawaii Quality Assurance System (HQAS), for individuals who wish to obtain a state credential to work as an ASL sign language interpreter in the State of Hawaii but who do not seek national certification; and
WHEREAS, on average, only eight to twelve individuals per year take and pass the Disability and Communication Access Board HQAS test; and

WHEREAS, the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division has contracted for statewide interpreter referral services with a private agency, Hawaii Interpreting Services, LLC, which has experienced significant difficulty in securing ASL interpreters for community freelance interpreting assignments; and

WHEREAS, state agencies, especially agencies that are heavy users of interpreter services, such as the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division of the Department of Human Services and the University of Hawaii, are also having difficulty meeting their obligations to provide communication access to deaf and hard of hearing individuals; and

WHEREAS, the lack of ASL interpreters seriously impacts the lives of persons who are deaf in obtaining and maintaining jobs, affecting their health, safety, and interactions of daily life; and

WHEREAS, the State of Hawaii has an Interpreter Education and Training Program at Kapiolani Community College whose purpose, in part, is to train students to become working interpreters to increase the pool of available ASL interpreters in the State of Hawaii; and

WHEREAS, although the Kapiolani Community College Interpreter Education and Training Program has offered many classes to individuals who have increased their proficiency in ASL and has promoted the advancement of educational assistants in the school system with sign language interpreting skills, the number of graduates who have become working freelance interpreters has not increased in the community; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2010, that the Legislative Reference Bureau is requested to conduct a study to determine what barriers (rates, benefits, reimbursement mechanisms, etc.) in existing law, rules,
regulations, or policies exist to securing more ASL community interpreting hours; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Disability and Communication Access Board and Hawaii Interpreting Services, LLC, are requested to assist the Legislative Reference Bureau in surveying ASL interpreters currently working in the State of Hawaii; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study provide recommendations as to statutory changes that might be enacted and administrative or program changes that might be implemented to increase the availability of ASL interpreters, including but not limited to changes in areas such as:

1. The Disability and Communication Access Board;
2. Title 11, chapter 218, Hawaii Administrative Rules;
3. The HQAS test;
4. The Kapiolani Community College Interpreter Education and Training Program; and
5. The Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division Interpreter Referral Contract; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Reference Bureau is requested to consult with the Disability and Communication Access Board, the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division, Kapiolani Community College Interpreter Education Program, Hawaii Interpreting Services, LLC, Hawaii Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Purple Communications, and user groups of ASL interpreting services in formulating recommendations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Reference Bureau submit its findings and recommendations to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the 2011 Regular Session; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Executive Director of the Disability and Communication Access Board, the Administrator of
the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division, the Chancellor of the Kapiolani Community College, the Hawaii Interpreting Services, LLC, the Administrator of the Hawaii Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, and the Director of the Legislative Reference Bureau.

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