

JAN 23 2015

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the office of  
2 language access was established by Act 290, Session Laws of  
3 Hawaii 2006, and amended by Act 201, Session Laws of Hawaii  
4 2012, to provide oversight, central coordination, and technical  
5 assistance to twenty-six state agencies and approximately one  
6 hundred fifty state-funded agencies in implementing the  
7 requirements of Hawaii's language access law.

8           The office of language access has a statutory mandate to  
9 ensure that state and state-funded agencies are in compliance  
10 with Hawaii's language access law. The office of language  
11 access provides technical assistance to agencies in the form of  
12 needs assessments, assistance with language access plans,  
13 training of agency staff, work with interpreters and  
14 translators, and data collection and reporting. The office of  
15 language access also conducts periodic compliance monitoring,  
16 provides complaint resolution, and reports annually to the  
17 governor and legislature. The office's staff was cut to a



1 single position in 2009 due to the State's reduction in force.  
2 Although two of the six positions were restored in 2013,  
3 critical staff positions remain unfilled.

4 The legislature further finds that Act 217, Session Laws of  
5 Hawaii 2013, created the language access resource center within  
6 the office of language access. The delay and timing of the  
7 executive branch's release of funds to staff the language access  
8 resource center made it impossible to fill the positions  
9 established by Act 217.

10 The objectives of the language access resource center are  
11 laudable, but require a tremendous amount of planning,  
12 coordination, and management. The existing office of language  
13 access staff expended great efforts and manpower to get the  
14 language access resource center off the ground - work which was  
15 envisioned to fall on the desks of the new language access  
16 resource center staff, who have yet to be hired.

17 As a result, the office of language access has not been  
18 able to fully perform its original statutorily-mandated  
19 compliance and technical assistance functions. Accordingly,  
20 many state agencies have been unable to implement important  
21 aspects of their language access plans due to lack of oversight



1 and technical assistance and many limited English proficient  
2 individuals in Hawaii continue to lack meaningful access to  
3 government services, programs, and activities.

4 The purpose of this Act is to establish three positions  
5 within the office of language access, as originally envisioned  
6 in the office's implementing legislation, to assist state  
7 agencies and state-funded agencies in implementing the  
8 requirements of Hawaii's language access law.

9 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$200,000 or so much  
11 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2015-2016 and the  
12 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
13 2016-2017 to establish three full-time equivalent (3.0 FTE)  
14 positions comprised of two program specialists and one office  
15 assistant within the office of language access to assist state  
16 agencies and state-funded agencies in implementing the  
17 requirements of Hawaii's language access law.

18 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
19 of health for the purposes of this Act.

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# S.B. NO. 926

1 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2015.

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# S.B. NO. 926

**Report Title:**

Office of Language Access; Appropriation; Language Access Law

**Description:**

Establishes three positions within the office of language access to assist state agencies and state-funded agencies in implementing the requirements of Hawaii's language access law.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

