



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V) • VP (808) 204-2466 • (808) 204-2466 (VP)

MINUTES

Standing Committee on Communication Access Meeting

LOCATION: Virtual via Zoom and In-Person Location
Kamamalu Building
1010 Richards Street, Rm. 111A and 111B
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

DATE: July 16, 2025
TIME: 11:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Gerald Isobe, Chairperson; LisaAnn Tom, Board Member; Bryan Mick,
Kristine Pagano, Justin "Pono" Tokioka, Staff

PUBLIC PARTICIPANT: Peter Fritz

SIGN LANGUAGE
INTERPRETERS: Mala Arkin and Jackie Gonzalez

REAL TIME
CAPTIONERS: April Chandler and Kelly DeCamp

- I. Chairperson Gerald Isobe called the meeting to order at 11:08 a.m.
- II. Board members, staff, captioners, and sign language interpreters introduced themselves.
- III. Statement from Public and Written Testimonies Submitted.

Peter Fritz raised several concerns related to communication accessibility and ADA compliance:

- DCAB's Program and Services Manual:
 - The Manual has not been updated in over six (6) years, leaving a lack of guidance during key periods like the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Accessibility Barriers:
 - Important accessibility information is often hidden in secondary documents, violating DCAB's own policy that information should be easy to find.
 - Issues with accessing captions during meetings; some software systems claim to offer captions but do not.
- ADA Coordination Issues:
 - Agencies often don't know who their ADA Coordinator is.

- Previous efforts to improve coordination have stalled, and meetings with the Coordinators have not resumed.
- Need for Better Outreach:
 - DCAB should actively send out guidance and updates to ADA Coordinators and the public, like the Office of Information Practices does.
- Concerns About Artificial Intelligence (AI):
 - Increasing use of AI in interviews and meetings may disadvantage people with disabilities, especially if participation and engagement is evaluated.
 - DCAB should study the implications of AI use on accessibility.
- Recommendations for Improvement:
 - Update the Program and Services Manual to strengthen the communication and outreach policies.
 - Review issues relating to the State calendar and accessibility.
 - Ensure no one is denied accommodations due to confusion about ADA Coordinator roles and responsibilities
- Language Reform Suggestion:
 - Oppose the use of terms like “hearing impaired” and “vision impaired,” which imply something is wrong with the individual.
 - DCAB should initiate a resolution to have the Legislative Reference Bureau study and revise such terminology in Hawai‘i Revised Statutes.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes of June 19, 2025.

The minutes of the June 19, 2025, meeting were approved as circulated (M/S/P Tom/Isobe).

V. Old Business

A. Update on the 2025 Communication Access State Conference.

Staff provided an update on the 2025 Communication Access State Conference, which was held on June 26, 2025 at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai‘i. The event was considered a success, with approximately one hundred ten (110) attendees, including ADA Coordinators and professionals from federal, state, and county levels, as well as interpreters. Although there were some no-shows and low turnout from the Deaf community—likely due to scheduling during the summer workday—organizers noted this for future planning. The conference featured ten (10) exhibitors, and attendees praised the venue and food. Evaluation forms were distributed and received, though the results will be kept internal. Several Board and staff members were thanked for their participation and support. There is interest in making the conference an annual event.

B. Planning for the 2025 Deaf Awareness Day in September.

Discussion resumed regarding plans for Deaf Awareness Day, which is approximately two (2) months away. The Committee revisited ideas including hosting a Deaf panel, workshops, and inviting guest speakers to educate the public about Deaf culture, communication preferences, and the differences between American Sign Language (ASL) and English grammar. A suggestion was made to include a mix of Deaf individuals, a parent of a Deaf child, and professionals such as ASL teachers or communication access specialists.

Testimony: Peter Fritz raised the importance of educating the public on effective ways to communicate with Deaf and hard of hearing individuals and recommended integrating such content into the event as well as updating state policy and services manuals to reflect best practices.

The event is tentatively planned as a half-day (approximately 4 hours) on a weekend to allow broader community participation. Board members supported the idea of collaboration with the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, especially their ASL program. Staff will begin outreach to secure a venue and speaker(s), aiming to host an engaging and inclusive event.

C. Review of the proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026 Plan of Action Communication Access Section including any proposed revisions to goals and objectives for the Communication Access Program.

The Committee reviewed and approved the proposed Fiscal Year 2025–2026 Plan of Action for the Communication Access Program. Key updates included adding a section to improve and integrate the safety website, aligning the state conference with Deaf Awareness Day in September 2026 (which moves it to the following fiscal year), and incorporating training for first responders on supporting individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind during emergencies. A section on electronic information technology accessibility was removed, as it fell outside the scope of this area. The Plan also continues efforts to secure funding and support for increasing the number of qualified ASL interpreters, including establishing a training program within the University of Hawai'i system. Additional discussion emphasized the need to regularly update the Programs and Services Manual to reflect legislative and policy changes, with broad agreement that maintaining accurate and current guidance is essential. The Plan was unanimously approved by the Committee. (M/S/P Tom/Isobe).

VI. New Business

- There are no items for New Business.

VII. Open Forum

Peter Fritz encouraged the Committee to begin early discussions on legislative priorities for the next session, especially those tied to communication access. He suggested potential actions such as introducing resolutions to remove outdated terms like “impaired” from official language, advocating for more communication

access teachers and interpreters, and seeking funding support through alliances with legislators and the governor. He also shared ideas already in development, including a “right to repair” bill for wheelchairs that could be expanded to assistive technologies for the Deaf community, and regulations ensuring people are notified if job interviews are conducted by AI bots, similar to laws passed in New York City. The Committee expressed support for these ideas, emphasizing shared goals and the importance of early planning.

VIII. Announcement of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 11, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

NOTE: All votes were unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/
JUSTIN TOKIOKA