

LANGUAGE ACCESS ADVISORY COUNCIL (LAAC) MEETING MINUTES

ZOOM MEETING

Join by phone: 1 (346) 248-779

Meeting ID: 992 5461 8881

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

PRESENT: Aphirak “A.P.” Bamrungruan, Ex-officio, Robin Wurtzel for Bill Hoshijo, Hawaii Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) Ex-officio, Colin Whited for Kirby Shaw, Disability & Communication Access Board, Ex-officio, Cristina Arsuaga, Linda Nuland-Ames, Tulpe Day, Cari Uesugi, Terrina Wong, Chair, Valentina Yarovaya, Suzanne Zeng, Vice-Chair

EXCUSED: Charlotte Huang, Lydia A. Pavon, Shirl Schumacher, Jade Wong

GUESTS/STAFF: ASL Interpreters: Māla Arkin, Torrey Ho-Ching, OLA Staff: Edward Wada, Wei Geng Lum, Gail McGarvey

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION
1. Call to Order	Terrina Wong, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:37 AM with quorum.
2. Welcome and Introductions	Chair welcomed the council to the Zoom meeting.
3. Approval of Minutes of January 06, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motion was made to approve the meeting minutes by Robin Wurtzel. Seconded by AP Bamrungruan. No discussion.• Minutes for January 06, 2021 approved.• MOTION CARRIED.
4. OLA Executive Director (ED) Report	ED reported on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council’s Position Statement for OLA. OLA’s statement was based on a model used by HCRC and was sent to key legislators, DOH, Budget & Finance. A follow-up meeting was made to urge them of their commitment to language access. The Governor’s budget proposal eliminates OLA and merges it as a program within DOH. OLA would like to keep its status as an attached agency. Terrina Wong and ED had a meeting with the Director of Finance, Craig K. Hirai, and Budget Administrator, Neal Miyahara who were in support of OLA and suggested OLA work with DOH. They also met with Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair of the Finance Committee (FIN) and Representative Ryan Yamane, Chair for Health, Human Services, & Homelessness Committee (HHH) on the House side. Meetings to be scheduled with the Senate.
5. Report of the Interim Chair	Terrina Wong, Chair, reported this was her first time being involved with the State Legislature. She said, in meetings at the Leg many recognized the quality of work being produced by OLA with praises for the work AP has

	<p>done in language access during this pandemic. She said Craig Hirai, Director of Finance, Rep. Ryan Yamane, Chair/HHH, Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair/FIN, Rep. Linda Ichiyama, Ad Hoc Committee on Emergency Preparedness and Covid-19 – are very supportive of OLA and we can rely on them for their support.</p>
<p>7. Items for Discussion 2021 Legislative Session (Items 5 and 6 were combined for discussion)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Bill 1230 passed at yesterday’s hearing. Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair/HTH said they recognized the mandatory statues of OLA and recognized the functioning of language access is needed whether it be done by DOH or by OLA. ED said SB1230 introduced changing the statutory mandate from “shall” to “may” – this makes it optional or permissive instead of mandatory and there was strong opposition from the advocates. The Health Chair, Sen. Keohokalole agreed to change the wording back to “shall”. Terrina Wong added that the proposed change to “may”, making things optional could undermine the protection of the LEP communities and make the functions of OLA optional rather than mandatory. This could weaken the non-discrimination protections based on national origins and create significant harm to LEP residents and immigrants many of whom face language access barriers when accessing services and programs. Lastly, she invited any member of the council to accompany her and ED to attend future meetings with state legislators to discuss bills relating to language access or to OLA. Tina Yarovaya said she would be interested to join in.
	<p>ED pointed out that as a part of the Executive Branch, OLA should not be in opposition of what the Governor proposes. OLA must remain objective. The goal is to keep OLA as an attached agency. In testimony submitted by DOH they are willing to work with OLA. ED sent a memo via DOH to the Governor to request that OLA be brought back into the budget. There is no request for money. We should not expect to hear back until mid-March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Bill 728. Rep. Yamane introduced a bill to support OLA, his bill allows OLA to accept federal grants or private monies. Rep. Sylvia Luke supports OLA but questions its reduction to two staff positions - she wants to know how OLA will function with only two staff positions and budget reductions. The Governor’s Message will be key in determining OLA’s outcome. It is still too early in the session and the situation may change. • Collecting LEP stories. Terrina Wong brought up discussion started at the last LAAC meeting for collecting stories on language access out in the field, supporting the need for language access which will be used to share with the Legislature. Please send your personal stories to OLA, who will share them with the council. • Testimony. If an LAAC member is submitting a story as a personal experience it should be submitted “in a personal capacity” and as a “comment”. Cristina Arsuaga as a member of the LAAC said she is also submitting testimony as a professional interpreter who is giving support as “commenting”, instead of “for or against”. She shared her testimony of HB728 and her personal experience. All testimony from council members should show support of ED/OLA – not against. Went over how to submit testimony online at Hawaii State Legislature. Information and instructions will be sent to the council and they can use Cristina Arsuaga’s testimony as a template.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cristina Arsuaga asked ED about his preference of working with OLA’s adjusted budget – would he want to partner with private groups or stay within the Legislative’s limited budget. ED said he would look at partnering with other state agencies, provide more technical assistance, rely more on technology and relook at reducing expenses and functioning on a smaller scale. Sue Zeng asked if we can write for grants. Yes, HB728 would allow for OLA to accept money from federal grants. Cari Uesugi said Department of Human Services (DHS) depends on technical assistance from OLA and would like to see a partnership with DHS and OLA. Also, DHS had sent excellent testimony in support of OLA. • Sue Zeng suggested asking hospitals if they would be interested in supporting a coordinated effort or partnership with OLA. Sue was willing to make contacts with the hospitals for support. ED would consider OLA expanding partnerships with different organizations.
8. Next Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next council meeting date Wednesday, April 14, 2021 via Zoom, same time.
9. Announcements	<p>Sue Zeng said Hawaii Pacific Health (HPH) had asked Language Services Hawaii for help in translations in languages regarding vaccination information for LEP persons. Kaiser and Straub also did an excellent job in getting instructions and their vaccination plans translated.</p> <p>ED has been attending weekly meetings with the DOH Covid-19 Vaccination Communication Work Group, who found LEP were not aware of how to register for vaccinations, do not have computers, or do not know how to use the internet. Terrina Wong suggested that he let them know that the non-profit organizations can help with the vaccinations.</p> <p>ED will send link and templates to the council members for submitting testimony and comments for the upcoming hearings related to OLA bills. He will also keep the council updated on the Leg happenings. Contact ED if you want to join him and Terrina Wong in meeting with Legislators regarding OLA bills.</p>
10. Adjournment	<p>The Chair, Terrina Wong officially adjourned the meeting at 10:41 AM.</p>

Respectfully submitted by Gail McGarvey