

HAWAII STATE HEALTH PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
1177 Alakea Street, Suite 402 • Honolulu, HI 96813 • Phone: (808) 587-0788 • www.shpda.org
Honolulu Subarea Health Planning Council

DRAFT

Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2025, | 1:00 PM Hawaii Time
Virtually via Zoom and Physical Meeting Location at
The Keoni Ana Building, 1177 Alakea Street, Suite 402

MEMBERS: Tori Abe Carapelho, Trisha Kajimura, Wesley Sumida, Jodi Hashimoto, Creighton Liu, Wesley Sumida

MEMBERS ABSENT: Katherine Finn Davis, Charlene Takeno,

SHPDA: John Lewin, Terry Visperas

ATTENDANCE RECORD OF APPOINTED MEMBERS

Date	11/14/2024	1/23/2025	2/20/2025	3/18/2025	5/15/2025	7/18/2025	8/8/2025	09/12/2025	11/14/2025
Tori Abe Carapelho*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Katherine Finn Davis**	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O
Trisha Kajimura	O	X	O	X	O	X	X	O	X
Wesley Sumida	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X
Charlene Takeno	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	O
Creighton Liu		X	O	X	O	O	X	X	X
Jodi Hashimoto		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Legend: X=Present; O=Absent; /=No Meeting, *-Chair, **-Vice Chair

Meeting Recording: Not available for security reasons due to unsolicited and offensive interruption.

TOPIC	DISCUSSION	ACTION
<p>Call to Order</p> <p>Minutes</p> <p>Guest Speaker/HONSAC Chair: Tori Abe-Carapelho, founder Hear 4 Hope</p>	<p>The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Tori Abe Carapelho, Chairperson, presiding.</p> <p>Motion to accept the minutes made from the September 12, 2025, meeting. By C. Liu, seconded by T. Kajimura</p> <p>Vote: Unanimous. Motion Carried.</p> <p>Public testimony – None.</p> <p>Hear 4 Hope: A 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to supporting people living with hearing loss through education and advocacy; the Hawaii chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America; runs a HOPE support group.</p> <p>The Challenge: Approximately 50 million Americans suffer from hearing loss. People wait an average of 7 to 10 years before seeking help, often because there is no physical pain. Only 1 in 5 people who could benefit from a hearing aid use one. Hearing loss is not just about volume but also clarity, directionality, and processing speech in noise.</p> <p>Systemic Issues in Hawaii:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Coordinated System: No statewide plan, shared vision, or coordinating body. Agencies operate in silos, leading to fragmented care and confusion. • No Post-Newborn Screening/Follow-up: Screening and intervention drop off after the first 6 months of life, leaving school-aged children, adults, and Kupuna without regular screenings. • Severe Workforce Shortage: Long wait times and insurance barriers (providers often do not accept Medicaid due to low reimbursement). Hawaii ranks 42nd in the country for speech/language/hearing professionals. • Prohibitive Cost: Hearing aids cost between \$7,000 and \$10,000 a pair; Medicare and most private insurance do not cover them. Cost is the number one barrier. • Lack of Centralized Data: No data to guide planning, measure progress, or secure funding. 	

Discussion and Q&A

- **Unaddressed Downstream Consequences:** Hearing loss is linked to social withdrawal, mental health issues, **dementia, increased fall risk**, and reduced workforce participation, but is not integrated into related public health frameworks.

Proposed Solutions:

- **Hawaii State Plan on Hearing Loss:** Proposed legislative bill to create a plan focusing on access, affordability, early detection, and support for all ages. It would involve a multi-sector task force to assess the landscape, identify gaps, and produce an actionable roadmap.
- **Sounds of Hope Program:** A new community-powered program that collects, refurbishes, and redistributes hearing aids to those in need. It leverages a partnership with Sertoma International and the University of Kansas.
- **Workforce Pipeline:** Partnering with **IEA High School's** Health Academy to create a hearing health track, training students for the hearing aid fitters licensing exam, and setting up a volunteer-provider clinic to serve patients and train students.
- **Dr. Lewin** expressed concern over the **financial barriers** and suggested the Council could be more aggressive in addressing them, particularly through legislation, noting the link between hearing loss and higher medical costs (dementia, falls).
- **Tori Carapelho** agreed that financial barriers are the biggest challenge, pointing out the cost of aids and the lack of Medicaid acceptance. She noted that previous hearing aid bills have failed and reiterated that the State Plan is key to getting all stakeholders, including payers, to understand the **downstream costs** of unaddressed hearing loss.
- **Trisha Kajimura** inquired about the responsible entity for the State Plan. **Tori Carapelho** confirmed ongoing conversations with the Department of Health's **Chronic Disease and Health Prevention Division**.

<p>State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA) Updates</p>	<p>J. Lewin, SHPDA Administrator, updates:</p> <p>AHEAD Project & Rural Health Transformation Funding</p> <p>Summary: The AHEAD project is progressing and remains a priority for the current administration, unlike other canceled grants. A key strategy is using Rural Health Transformation Program funds to prepare local healthcare providers (hospitals, FQHCs, doctors) for value-based reimbursement. This creative use of funds helps preserve the AHEAD grant's limited budget (\$12 million over 5 years) for actuarial and consultant services.</p> <p>Interoperability & Electronic Health Records (EHRs)</p> <p>Summary: SHPDA successfully advocated for and will potentially administer funds to achieve full interoperability among all healthcare providers. This includes providing or upgrading Electronic Health Records (EHRs) for rural health providers and those on neighbor islands to ensure better coordinated care across the state.</p> <p>Expanded Use of Transformation Funds</p> <p>Summary: The Rural Health Transformation funds are being eyed for several impactful projects beyond EHRs, including providing internet/Wi-Fi access in underserved communities, creating a statewide quality of care hub, funding the start of Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), and launching the Kupuna Aloha project.</p> <p>Kupuna Aloha: Primary Care in the Home</p> <p>Summary: The Kupuna Aloha project aims to extend primary care services into the home, which is not currently covered by Medicare. This initiative is particularly vital for the elderly (Kupuna) who are often not dual-eligible (Medicare/MedQuest) but still lack access to home and community-based services. This program also presents an opportunity to train community health workers (CHWs).</p>	
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Governor's Funding Goal & Procurement Challenge

Summary: The Governor is actively negotiating with the federal government, hoping to secure up to \$180 million per year (up from \$100 million) for the next five years for the Rural Health Transformation Program. The biggest immediate challenge, however, will be the timely and efficient procurement process within the state government to ensure the funds reach the intended people and programs.

Increased Community Feedback Role for SHPDA

Summary: The state has designated SHPDA's sub-area advisory councils to take on a significantly larger role in providing community feedback regarding how the substantial Rural Health Transformation funds are spent. This is intended to satisfy federal requirements and ensure the dollars are spent effectively.

Governor's "Gypsy Thing" Negotiation

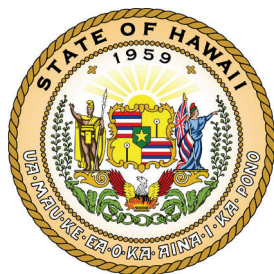
Summary: In separate negotiations, likely tied to military land concessions, the Governor's primary healthcare objective is to solve the long-standing issue known as the "gypsy thing." Success in this negotiation would bring an estimated \$250 million annually to the state to provide fair and decent reimbursement to outpatient providers, which is critical for the survival of independent practices. The legislative effort (PATCH Act) to achieve this has struggled to gain traction in Congress.

No committee reports, updates of announcements. Deferred to future meeting

Next Meeting Schedule:

- Thursday, December 18, 2025, at 1PM

The meeting was adjourned at 1:13PM.



**Honolulu Subarea
Health Planning Council
(HONSAC)**





Hear 4 Hope – 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting those living with hearing loss through Support, Resources, Education, & Advocacy



Hear 4 Hope is the Hawaii Chapter of Hearing Loss Association of America, the nations leading advocacy organization for people with hearing loss



Hearing Other People's Experiences is Hear 4 Hope's peer-to-peer support group. A welcoming space offering coping strategies & shared experiences, empowering members with tools, education & confidence.



WHAT IS HEARING LOSS?



HEARING LOSS IS A

SILENT & FREQUENTLY OVERLOOKED HEALTH CHALLENGE

- Approximately **50 Million** Americans suffer from some degree of hearing loss – **15% of the Population!**
- **Even More** Projected in Hawaii
 - Cultural Nuances
 - Significant Aging Population
 - Dominant Military Presence



Source: Hearing Loss Association of America

7-10 YEARS TO SEEK HELP

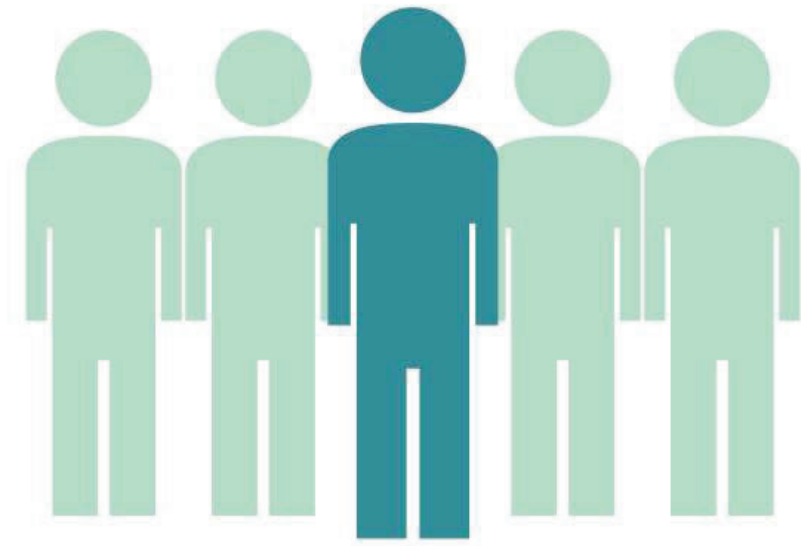
- People with hearing loss **wait an average of 7-10 years** before seeking help.
- Unlike other conditions, **no physical pain**, so people don't seek care – yet *impacts are profound*



Source: Hearing Loss Association of America

ONLY ONE IN FIVE

- Only **1 in 5** people who would benefit from a hearing aid actually uses one.



Source: Hearing Loss Association of America

UNDERSTANDING HEARING LOSS

Types & Daily Impact

Isn't Just About Volume.



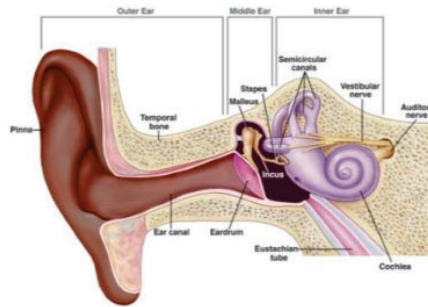
Hearing Loss Affects:

- Clarity
- Directionality
- Ability to Process Speech in Noisy Environments

Understanding the different types of hearing loss can help loved ones communicate more effectively.

TYPES OF HEARING LOSS

1. Conductive



Symptoms:

- Muffled Sounds
- Difficulty with Low Pitch
- Ear Fullness

Treatments:

- Removal of Ear Wax
- Medical Interventions

2. Sensorineural



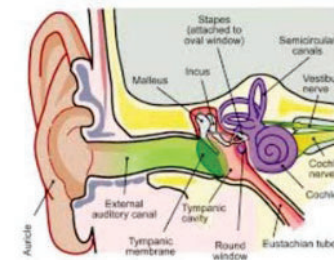
Symptoms:

- Trouble Understanding Speech (especially in noise)
- Difficulty Hearing Faint Sounds

Treatments:

- Hearing Aids
- Cochlear Implant

3. Mixed



Symptoms:

- Trouble Hearing Faint Sounds
- Understanding Speech
- Distinguishing High-Frequency Sounds

Treatments:

- Tailored Interventions
- Surgery
- Hearing Aids or Cochlear Implants



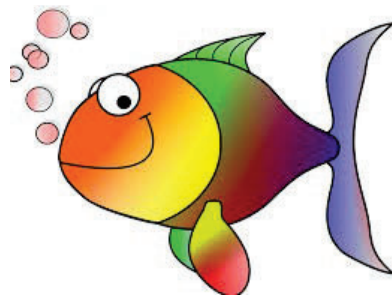
HOW HEARING LOSS IMPACTS REAL LIFE



AFFECTS ON DAILY INTERACTION

DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING SPEECH

- May hear sounds, but struggle with clarity
- High-Pitched Consonants are most difficult (ie: “s,” “f,” “th,” “sh”)



FISH



FIST

HEARING LOSS SIMULATOR

www.Hear4Hope.org/resources



NORMAL HEARING

Hi, Hadley. How's it going?

Good, Grandpa.

What did you do in school today?

Well, one main thing was that media got canceled. So our

MODERATE HEARING LOSS

Hi, Hadley. How's it going?

Good, Grandpa.

What did you do in school today?

Well, one main thing was that media got canceled. So our

MILD HEARING LOSS

Hi, Hadley. How's it going?

Good, Grandpa.

What did you do in school today?

Well, one main thing was that media got canceled. So our

SEVERE HEARING LOSS

Hi, Hadley. How's it going?

Good, Grandpa.

What did you do in school today?

Well, one main thing was that media got canceled. So our

AFFECTS ON DAILY INTERACTION

STRUGGLING IN NOISY ENVIRONMENTS

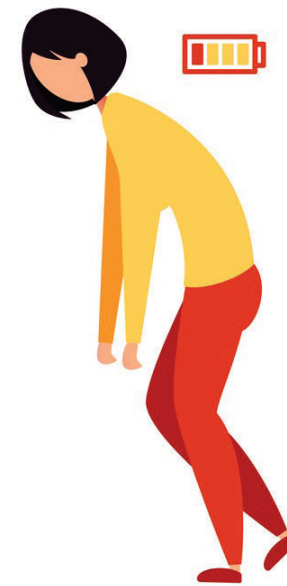
- Loss of Selective Hearing
(ability to separate speech from noise)
- Sounds Blend Together
- Poor Room Acoustics
- Hearing Aids & Sound Amplification



AFFECTS ON DAILY INTERACTION

LISTENING FATIGUE

Constantly Straining to Hear and Process Speech can be ***Mentally Exhausting***, leading to Frustration or Withdrawal from Social Situations.



EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Hearing loss **doesn't just affect your ears.**

It *disconnects you from the world*,
straining relationships and often leading to
frustration, isolation, and depression.



SYSTEMIC ISSUES



NO COORDINATED STATEWIDE SYSTEM

- **No State-Level Plan**
 - There is no shared vision, no aligned goals, and no oversight
- **No Coordinating Body**
 - Agencies, nonprofits, providers, schools, operate independently
- **No Unified Strategy**
 - As a result, families are left to navigate services on their own

Impact: *Fragmented Care, Confusion, & Major Statewide Gaps*

NO SCREENING OR FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM AFTER NEWBORN STAGE

- School-Aged Keiki
- Working Adults
- Kupuna

Primary care providers rarely screen for hearing loss, and there is no statewide protocol for follow-up

***Impact: People wait 7-10 years before seeking help.
Problems become more severe and harder to treat.***

SEVERE SHORTAGE OF HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

- Long wait times
- **Insurance** Barriers (many don't take Medicaid)
- Limited access on **neighbor islands**
- Growing **Kupuna** Population
(increased demand)
- **Workforce pipeline** is not supported

American Speech & Language Hearing Association 2023 Report

- Hawaii ranks 42nd in the country
- 2-3 audiologists per 1,000 residents

Impact: *Even people who WANT to get care struggle to get it.*

HEARING AIDS AND SERVICES ARE PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE

- Hearing Aids can cost \$7,000-10,000 per pair
- Medicare does not cover them
- Many private plans do not cover them
- Upkeep costs (batteries, repairs, fittings) add burden
- Low-income families and kupuna are hit the hardest



Impact: *Cost is the #1 barrier to early detection and treatment.*

NO CENTRALIZED DATA TO GUIDE PLANNING OR FUNDING

- Prevalence
- Demographics
- Severity
- Service Availability
- Outcomes
- Provider Capacity



Impact: Hawaii cannot measure progress or make evidence-based decisions – and loses opportunities for federal and foundation funding

DOWNSTREAM HEALTH & SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES ARE UNADDRESSED



- Social withdrawal and loneliness
- Mental health issues
- Cognitive decline and dementia
- Increased fall risk
- Reduced workforce participation
- Caregiver burden

Yet, Hearing Loss Isn't Integrated Into:

- Aging Services
- Chronic Disease Prevention
- Mental Health Programs
- Fall Prevention
- Caregiver Support
- Public Health Frameworks

Impact: We pay more later in healthcare, long-term care, and social services.

DISCONNECTED SYSTEM LEAVES FAMILIES NAVIGATING ALONE

Without a clear statewide structure:

- Families **don't know where to go**
- Referrals are **inconsistent**
- **Follow-up** rarely happens
- Care is *reactive* instead of proactive
- Many **give up** entirely



Impact: *People fall through the cracks every day!*

STIGMA & LACK OF PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

- Many are **ashamed or afraid** to wear hearing devices
- They **don't know when to seek help**, or what services exist
- Delayed intervention leads to **avoidable impacts on quality of life**



INVISIBLE DISABILITY

- Unlike visible disabilities, hearing loss **often goes unnoticed** until it becomes so severe

Some disabilities
look like this:



Others look like this:



Not all disabilities are visible.

Be You. Be Heard.
**HEAR
4
HOPE**



SOLUTIONS



INTRODUCE LEGISLATIVE BILL

HAWAII STATE PLAN ON HEARING LOSS

- Create a **coordinated, statewide strategy** to *improve hearing health* across Hawaii, focusing on:
 - Access
 - Affordability
 - Early Detection
 - Support from Keiki to Kupuna



WHAT THE PLAN WILL DO

- **Access** Hawaii's current **hearing health landscape**
- **Identify gaps** in screening, care, workforce, and affordability
- **Engage stakeholders** across agencies, healthcare, and community organizations
- **Gather data** to understand prevalence, capacity and needs
- Develop **recommendations for policy, programs, and statewide coordination**
- Produce an ***actionable roadmap*** for improving hearing health

WHO WILL BE INVOLVED

- **A Multisector Collaboration Including:**
 - State Agencies
 - Healthcare Providers & Audiologists
 - Community Organizations & Nonprofits
 - Individuals with Lived Experiences

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- A comprehensive written **State Plan** on Hearing Health
- Clear statewide **priorities & strategies**
- **Recommendations** for screening, referral, access, and affordability
- A **structure** for ongoing coordination across agencies and community partners
- A **foundation for future funding**, programming, and legislative action



BRIDGING THE GAP



SOUNDS OF HOPE

Sounds of Hope is a community-powered program that collects, refurbishes, and redistributes hearing aids to individuals who need them most.



Donate Your Hearing Aids:

We accept any make, model, or condition — including devices from upgrades, demo units, or those no longer being used by a loved one.



We Prepare Devices for Use:

Through partnerships with leading manufacturers, donated devices are professionally refurbished or replaced with new inventory as available — ensuring every hearing aid we distribute meets high-quality standards. Unusable units are responsibly recycled.



We Match Devices with Qualified

Recipients: Hearing aids are paired with individuals based on their hearing needs and financial situation to ensure they receive the right technology.



We Offer Follow-Up Support:

Recipients receive continued support for a set period — including adjustments, maintenance, and troubleshooting — to make sure their hearing aids are working well and they feel confident using them.

In partnership with local hearing care providers and Aiea High School's Health Academy,

Sounds of Hope connects clinical expertise with student learning —

creating a meaningful hands-on pipeline for future healthcare professionals while serving our community today.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- **Support the State Plan**
- **Share the Issue** with Colleagues
- **Help Us Get Key Agencies to the Table**
- **Promote Hearing Screenings**
- **Stay Connected** with Our Work



Questions??





Mahalo!

Tori Carapelho, CEO/Founder

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www.Hear4Hope.org



@Hear4Hope