



**S E A C**  
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Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Committee on Judiciary  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 986, HD 1, SD 1 - Relating to Newborn Hearing Screening

Dear Chairs Dela Cruz and Rhoads and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is in strong support of HB 986, HD 1, SD 1 which requires diagnostic audiologic evaluation results of newborn hearing screening evaluations to be provided to the Department of Health.

Hawaii was a pioneer in this best practice of testing infants at birth to detect hearing loss. The development of an early screening program was given a high priority due to fact that Hawaii has twice the rate of infants born deaf or hard of hearing per capita than other states.

However, a number of infants who failed their hearing screening are lost to follow-up every year by the Newborn Hearing Screening Program, because their diagnostic evaluation results are not shared with the Department of Health. By mandating this reporting, we ensure that the families of these infants are offered timely early intervention services that supports the family and better prepares young children for entry into preschool by helping them acquire language.

Mahalo for the opportunity to express our support for this important legislation.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan, Chair