



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
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April 5, 2022

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Advisory Council**

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Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Committee on Judiciary
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB 987, 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 987, HD 1, SD 1 which amends the hearing and vision program statute to increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement.

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. Screener training is also needed to ensure that consistent protocols are set for hearing screening. Through these improvements to the system, we ensure that the families of these infants are offered timely early intervention services that support 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