

Statewide Independent Living Council of Hawaii (SILC) Monthly Meeting Minutes [APPROVED]

Date: February 5, 2025

Time: 9:00 AM – approximately 11:10 AM

Location: Hybrid – In Person (Honolulu) & Zoom videoconference

Call to Order – Philip (Vice Chair)

Meeting called to order at approximately 9:00 AM. Philip (Vice Chair) conducted the meeting. Members provided visual self-descriptions for audio accessibility.

Roll Call / Attendance

SILC Members Present:

- Patrick Gartside, SILC Member (Chair) – In Person
- Philip Ana, SILC Member (Vice Chair) – In Person
- Donald Sakamoto, SILC Member (Secretary) – In Person
- Annette Tashiro, SILC Member (Treasurer) – Zoom
- Jodi Asato, SILC Member – Zoom
- Cat Garrell, SILC Member – Zoom
- Brian Hauser, SILC Member – Zoom
- Nani Watanabe, SILC Member – Zoom
- Vicki Kennedy, SILC Member – Zoom (joined 9:20 AM)

SILC Members Absent:

- Lea Dias
- Judy Guajardo

Staff:

- Amanda Lowe, Executive Director

Guests:

- Cheryl Matthews, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Liaison
- Ann De Silva Williams – Retired, University of Hawaii Windward Community College

Independent Living Philosophy – Amanda Lowe

Amanda read the Independent Living Philosophy statement: Independent living is a movement, program, and philosophy founded on the belief that people with disabilities should enjoy the same civil rights, choices, and autonomy as those without disabilities, with the right to live in the community of their choice with necessary supports. Persons with disabilities are the best experts on their own lives and bodies.

Approval of Agenda – Patrick Gartside

Patrick proposed removing two items under the Advocacy Committee Report due to a concern from a member of the public about Office of Information Practices (OIP) Sunshine Law compliance:

- Item 6.e.i.4 – Bills We’re Watching (subparts: National Federation of the Blind, Hawaii Association of the Blind, State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Disability Communication Access Board, Kupuna Caucus)
- Item 6.e.i.5 – SILC’s Proposed Legislation

These items were tabled for the next meeting.

Patrick made a motion to amend agenda by removing items 6.e.i.4 and 6.e.i.5.

Donald seconded the motion

Result: Unanimous approval. No opposition.

Approval of Minutes – January 15, 2025

Amanda noted a correction to the spelling of a council member’s name: “Letty” (L-E-T-T-Y) and last name correction.

Philip made a motion to accept minutes with amendments.

Donald seconded the motion

Result: Unanimous approval.

SILC Reports

SILC Activities Report – Amanda Lowe

Highest number of activity reports ever received. Highlights by State Plan for Independent Living goal:

Goal 1: Enhance Independent Living Network Impact

- Monthly meeting held January 15.
- A council member is chairing the Hawaii Association of the Blind (HAB) 59th Convention, scheduled for Saturday, March 7, at the Ala Moana Hotel.

Goal 2: Inform and Guide Response to Emerging Issues

- Amanda and a council member attended opening day of the legislature.
- Amanda met with Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC) on Dillingham Boulevard accessibility.
- A council member attended the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Citizen Advisory Committee and Disability Communication Access Board (DCAB) Standing Committees on Parking and Transportation.
- On January 8, Amanda and a council member attended the all-day Hawaii Transportation Forum.

Goal 3: Systems Change for Inclusive Communities

- Council members attended DCAB Legislative Committee meeting, Civil Cafe legislator preview, and Kaneohe Neighborhood Board.
- A council member testified twice on Bill 54 (transit fare increases).
- A council member advocated to include people with disabilities in a kupuna financial program and identified hospital-to-home transition support needs.

Goal 4: Equal Access During Disasters

- Council members completed Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training: Family Radio Services (Jan 1), intensive sessions at Kaneohe District Park (Jan 10, 17), and certification at Diamond Head Battery Harlow (Jan 31).

Other

- Program Performance Report (PPR) submitted to federal government with help from Cheryl Matthews.

Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART) / Dillingham Boulevard Accessibility Update – Amanda Lowe & Donald Sakamoto

SILC first contacted Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC) about Dillingham Blvd concerns in September. In January, a meeting was held at HART's office, in attendance HART representatives, Nan (contractors), HDRC representatives, a SILC representative, and a representative from Congressman Ed Case's office. Outcome: Nan/HART will organize a walkthrough of Dillingham Blvd with community members with disabilities. Donald Sakamoto will be coordinating dates with Brian Shin from Nan and will inform the council.

State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) Update

No new activity. A SPIL committee meeting is being organized but scheduling remains challenging.

Policies and Procedures Report – Amanda Lowe

Draft Policies and Procedures document sent with meeting materials. Committee members: Philip, Patrick, Cat, and Annette. The document has four sections:

- Section 1: General Policies (accessibility, communication, disputes, financial, conference attendance, human resources)
- Section 2: Member Policies (membership, training, conduct, conflict of interest, committees)
- Section 3: SPIL Policies and Procedures
- Section 4: Code of Ethics and Member Standards

Modeled after California and Oregon samples; reviewed with artificial intelligence (AI) for bylaws consistency. Updated DVR information incorporated. Living document with revision tracking. Includes SILC testimony procedures relevant to the legislative session. Council members to review during February and provide feedback.

Discussion: Patrick confirmed it will be a living document and asked about the approval timeline. Donald requested a Word version. Cheryl requested the link in the Zoom chat. All documents will be posted on the SILC website.

Survey Committee Report

Committee meeting planned ~February 12. Reviewing surveys from 3 Centers for Independent Living (CIL) and 2 SILC website surveys. Goal: combine categories with rating scales, keep surveys shorter, align with Independent Living (IL) service delivery models. Donald raised the importance of phone/non-digital access. Patrick noted the website's "schedule online interview" feature and exploration of an artificial intelligence (AI) phone agent for multilingual surveys.

Advocacy Committee Report – Philip Ana

Philip reported sharing legislative alerts, monitoring federal issues (especially Medicaid), forwarding webinars, and encouraging council action on alerts from consumer organizations in Washington, D.C. Waiting for Policies and Procedures (P&P) testimony procedures to be finalized. Members following HAB and National Federation of the Blind (NFB) legislative priorities.

Capitol Website Accessibility Barriers

Multiple members reported barriers submitting testimony on capitol.hawaii.gov:

- Donald needed help submitting testimony for Senate Bill (SB) 2552 (technology accessibility); the Zoom link for oral testimony required navigating the website rather than being emailed.
- Ann De Silva Williams could write testimony online but the submit button did not work; had to have someone else submit.
- Donald recalled similar issues in 2024 requiring contact with House and Senate clerks for internet technology resolution.

Patrick called this a barrier to democratic participation. He and Philip planned to work together on submitting testimony after the meeting. Amanda directed attention to the public access room link on the agenda.

Accesible Pedestrian Signal (APS) Bill

Vicki Kennedy reported she and her husband would testify that afternoon at 3:00 PM on the APS bill.

Engagement/Membership Committee Report – Philip Ana

Committee meeting February 12 to review 4 new applications: 2 from Hawaii Island, 1 from Maui. Outreach made to an organization on Kauai. Three members awaiting Governor’s confirmation: Leah Diaz, Judy Guajardo, and Letty Zuno (SPIL representative). Amanda and Philip seeking meeting with Wendy Kondo at Governor’s office for status update.

Discussion: Cheryl clarified that “Engagement Committee” is the Membership Committee (agreed to call it “Engagement/Membership Committee”). Appointment start dates are July 1. Donald stressed urgency given members with expiring terms.

Transportation Report – Donald Sakamoto

- Attended Hawaii Transportation Forum (Jan 8) with national/Canadian speakers and state/city officials including State Director Ed Sniffen (Department of Transportation (DOT)) and Roger Morton (Director, Department of Transportation Services (DTS)).
- Testified on Bill 60 (2025) to extend rail (Skyline) from Kakaako to Ala Moana, and University of Hawaii (UH), emphasizing disability/kupuna accessibility during construction.

- John Nouchi reassigned as Director of Multimodal Transportation (bus, Skyline, Biki, Handi-Van). Donald advocated for disability group dialogue before infrastructure decisions.
- Recognized Transit Equity Day (Feb 4) at City Council; Council Member Radiant Cordero, Chair of Committee on Infrastructure, Transportation, and Technology commended the reminder.
- Next Citizens for a Fair ADA Ride (CFADAR) meeting: February 19, 9:45–11:45 AM, Hawaii CIL, hybrid. DTS/Skyline/TheBus/Handi-Van representatives present.

Break

10-minute break at approximately 10:00 AM.

Treasurer's Report – Annette Tashiro

Oral cash balance per Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised (no vote required). Supporting Strategies provides professional accounting with quarterly reports.

Beginning Balance (Dec 31, 2024): \$204,523 (rounded)

Ending Balance (Jan 31, 2025): \$197,562

Finance Committee Formed

Committee: Annette Tashiro (lead), Judy Guajardo, Philip; oversight by Chair and Amanda. Will meet quarterly minimum. Quarterly reports from Supporting Strategies and meeting packets to be posted on SILC website.

Council Member Spotlight: Bathroom Safety & Fall Prevention – Cat Garrell, Occupational Therapist (OT)

Cat presented on bathroom safety from an occupational therapy perspective:

Assessment Approach

- Focus on the person first – ask them to demonstrate transfers (shower, toilet); look for clues like hand marks on walls indicating where grab bars are needed.

What NOT to Install

- Suction cup grab bars – lose suction; caused broken knees/hips in 2 of Cat's clients.
- Tub cuts – still require stepping into wet, slippery surface; cost thousands.

Recommended Alternatives

- Properly installed grab bars (into stud, licensed contractor; \$100–\$200+/bar).
- Tub bench (\$60–\$80 at Walgreens/Longs) – two legs in, two out.
- Curbless shower for longer-term solutions.

Fall Prevention

- Four steps: speak up to providers, keep moving (exercise), annual eye exam, home modifications. Also check medication interactions.
- Resources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) STEADI (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries) checklist; American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Home Fit Guide (both free online).
- Motivating reluctant seniors: involve primary care doctor (most effective per multiple members' experience). Vicki Kennedy: “Just install it – don't ask” (cared for mother to age 106). Donald: lower showerhead, soap dish, install grab bars.
- Beware “ADA certified” contractors for homes – home mods should be customized. Builders should add wall backing so grab bars can go anywhere.

Older Adult Home Modification Program (Palolo Chinese Home / Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Grant)

- Up to \$5,000 free modifications for seniors 62+ in urban Honolulu (Hawaii Kai to Aiea).
- Income: ≤80% area median (~\$77,950/yr single). Serving 131 seniors over 2 years (5/month).
- Services: grab bars, lighting, bathroom mods, walkers, wheelchairs.

Insurance & Equipment

Durable Medical Equipment (DME) typically not covered. Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA) Medicare Advantage may have new spending portal. Standard wheelchairs/hospital beds usually covered; smaller items out of pocket. Assistive Technology Resource Center of Hawaii (ATRC) has equipment lending library.

New Construction & Permitting

Nani shared her experience at a Hawaiian Homes meeting on Lanai, where she advocated for wider bathroom doors, walk-in showers instead of tubs, and accessibility features in new construction. She noted the issue is not just aging – younger adults with injuries also face bathroom accessibility challenges. Cat suggested builders add backing behind bathroom walls so grab bars can be installed anywhere.

Cat advocated for expedited permitting for medical-need home modifications (similar to solar industry). Senator Marita's office contacted the Department of Permitting and Planning (DPP), which pushed back claiming permitting is now faster than ever. The bill was not advanced; Cat will continue monitoring.

Old Business: Mayor's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities – Donald Sakamoto

Amanda and Patrick drafting letter on SILC letterhead to Managing Director Mike Formby. DCAB also sent support letter. Topics: housing, transportation, parks/rec, emergency preparedness (citing July 29 tsunami). Donald stressed urgency while current mayor is in office.

New Business: Upcoming Events

- Feb 14: Leadership in Disability Achievement Conference, Maui (Amanda attending; coordinating with Nani's support groups)
- March 4: Day at the Capitol – SILC table. Volunteers: Annette, Philip, and Amanda. Nani escorting Developmental Disabilities (DD) clients from Maui organizations.
- March 7: HAB 59th Convention, Ala Moana Hotel (8 AM – banquet). Keynote by American Council of the Blind (ACB) treasurer; Saja Koirala (PhD) honored. Resource room, Meta Ray-Ban glasses workshop. SILC requested table.
- March 10: Maui Footsteps to Transition Fair
- March 16–19: National Association of Statewide Independent Living Councils (NASIL) Conference. Amanda attending; up to 3 additional members welcome (respond by following Thursday).
- Mar 28: Special Parent Information Network (SPIN) Conference
- July: National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Conference – proposal to send up to 4 (vote at future meeting). Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) Conference also noted.

Independent Living (IL) Services Discussion – Brian Hauser

Brian requested standing agenda items on IL service delivery, one topic per meeting:

- HDRC's oversight role over IL Centers
- Part B funding allocation: Oahu vs. neighbor islands; physical CILs on major islands
- Service delivery to rural areas including Lanai

Emphasized transparency so IL Centers can be present for discussions. Volunteered to serve on any related group.

Discussion: Patrick acknowledged this as a major community concern reflected in needs surveys. He proposed adding as a standing agenda topic, potentially through the SPIL Committee or a Permitted Interaction Group (PIG). Philip suggested a “discussion corner.” Nani strongly supported, noting CIL is the critical missing support for Maui County (Maui, Lanai, Molokai, Kahoolawe), especially post-Lahaina fire and in hospital-to-home transitions. Vicki raised emergency preparedness for people who are blind or mobility-impaired. Patrick noted the next quarterly meeting may potentially be held on Maui. The Executive Committee will meet soon to finalize the next agenda.

Vote to Extend Meeting

Patrick made a motion to extend the meeting up to 10 minutes

Vickie seconded the motion

Result: Unanimous approval

Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at approximately 11:10 AM.