

**Statewide Independent Living Council of Hawai'i  
Monthly Meeting Minutes [DRAFT]**

**Date:** March 5, 2026

**Time:** 9:03 AM – 12:03 PM

**Location (Zoom):** <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83211242897>

**Location (In Person):** Hub Coworking Hawaii, 1050 Queen St Suite 100, Honolulu, Hawai'i

**Call to Order – Patrick Gartside**

Meeting called to order at 9:03 AM.

**Roll Call / Attendance – Donald Sakamoto**

**SILC Members Present:**

- Philip Ana (Vice Chair)
- Jodi Asato
- Patrick Gartside (Chair)
- Judy Guajardo (Executive Committee Member, at-large)
- Brian Hauser
- Valerie Janikowski
- Vickie Kennedy
- Donald Sakamoto (Secretary)
- Annette Tashiro (Treasurer)
- Leticia Zuno
- Nani Watanabe

**SILC Members Absent:**

- Catia Garell
- Lea Dias

**Staff:**

- Amanda Lowe, Executive Director

**Guests:**

- Letty Zuno, Executive Director, Access to Independence
- Roxanne Bolden, Executive Director, Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH)
- Lehua Chang, Independent Living Specialist, AILH (Maui/Lana'i)
- Christine Pagano, Disability Communication Access Board (DCAB)
- Brian Mick, Interim Planner/ADA Coordinator, DCAB
- Noe de la Vega, Education and Training Coordinator, Leadership in Disabilities and Achievement of Hawaii (LDAH)
- Louis Erteschik, Director, Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC)
- Mikey Tomita, Community Member / Founder, Maui Center for Independent Living
- Regina and Jenny, ASL Interpreters

***Quorum established.***

## **Independent Living Philosophy – Amanda Lowe**

Amanda read the Independent Living Philosophy statement. Patrick invited attendees to reflect on what independent living means to each of them, noting the movement's history and ongoing work in housing, transportation, employment, and emergency preparedness.

## **Approval of Agenda**

Amanda proposed two modifications: (1) move Item 10 (Independent Living Services in the Community) to immediately follow the Centers for Independent Living (CIL) reports; (2) allow flexibility in the order of Item 7 (Community Reports) based on presenter availability.

**Motion:** Donald Sakamoto moved to approve the agenda with stated modifications.

**Second:** Annette Tashiro

**Result:** Unanimous approval

## **Approval of Minutes – February 5, 2025**

Jodi Asato requested two name corrections: her name is spelled J-O-D-I (not J-O-D-Y), and Lea Diaz is spelled L-E-A D-I-A-S.

**Motion:** Donald Sakamoto moved to approve the minutes with name corrections.

**Second:** Philip Ana

**Result:** Unanimous approval

## **Centers for Independent Living Reports**

### **Access to Independence – Letty Zuno, Executive Director**

Letty reported on Quarter1 service delivery across O‘ahu, including information and referral, IL skills training, housing navigation, peer counseling, and transition/diversion assistance. Key highlights:

- Operating through a program-based model; services expanded to cover all of O‘ahu through strategic hiring.
- Engaged in systemic advocacy on transportation, election accessibility, and emergency preparedness.
- Presented the One Step at a Time Youth Transition Program at the Quarterly Transition Group, by invitation from Cheryl Matthews.
- Letty closed by reading from the agency’s consumer handbook mission statement, emphasizing that independence “will mean something unique to each individual.”

#### Discussion:

- Donald Sakamoto asked how the agency is helping consumers manage the HandiVan fare increase (from \$2.25 to \$2.50 each way, effective July 1, 2026, per Bill 54). Letty responded that the agency addresses transportation systemically through advocacy, and individually by providing financial support for consumers with transportation-related goals.
- Brian Hauser confirmed the consumer handbook includes Hawaii Disability Rights Center as the Client Assistance Program. Letty confirmed and noted the benefits counselor on staff accepts referrals and assists with Social Security, food access, housing vouchers, Ticket to Work, and ABLE programs from application through appeal.
- Jodi Asato asked about staffing. Letty noted four coordinators: youth services, Homeward Bound/Steppingstones diversion, benefits counseling, and peer support.

## **Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) – Roxanne Bolden, Executive Director**

Roxanne noted for the record that the agency's full legal name is Aloha Independent Living Hawaii. Legislative and civic engagement highlights (January 1 – March 4, 2026):

- Reviewed 24 legislative measures; submitted written testimony on 21 bills.
- Submitted public comment on the Workforce Development Council Draft 2026–2028 Modified Unified Plan.
- Launched the Access to Democracy Initiative in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Hawaii – a three-year effort to strengthen disability-inclusive civic engagement statewide, beginning with a public panel on structural barriers to democratic participation.

Lana'i/Maui Update – Lehua Chang:

- Currently serves 17 consumers across Maui and Lana'i, including three on Lana'i visited monthly by boat.
- Working to secure funding for a portable accessible shower stall for a bedridden consumer with polio, in coordination with Lana'i Kinaole and Maui County Office on Aging.
- Planning a kupuna disability support group at Kaunoha's adult daycare facility on Lana'i (~25 current participants plus the broader disabled community).
- AILH also services Moloka'i, covering all of Maui County.

Discussion:

- Donald Sakamoto asked about Kona-Hilo transportation on Hawaii Island. Roxanne explained AILH received a \$75,000 grant to expand transportation in the Ka'u area. Service is individualized; consumers book a dedicated van in advance for full-day use including errands, pharmacy, and grocery trips with no time limit.
- Brian Hauser raised the council's concern that HDRC's consumer brochure does not reference the Client Assistance Program's role as oversight for independent living centers – only its DVR appeals function. This is being taken up with HDRC.
- Roxanne described a new campaign using positive disability language, launched with a social media feature on Cheryl Nelson's story as a blind waitress at Horatio's restaurant.

## **Independent Living Services in the Community – Service Availability and Outreach**

Patrick introduced this as a standing SPIL goal requiring centers to report on IL service availability by ZIP code. Key discussion points:

- Roxanne: All five core IL services are provided on all islands. Information is available via the ALLH website (including American Sign Language interpretation), brochures, community events, and partner agencies. A written list of all ALLH support groups, contact persons, and access information was previously submitted to SILC staff.
- Letty: Access to Independence has fulfilled its SPIL commitment to expand island-wide O‘ahu coverage. Last quarter: 46 hours community outreach, 20 hours technical assistance, 36 hours community education, 41 hours active outreach, 26 hours collaboration/networking (169 hours total systemic work).
- Both directors noted that consumers rarely use formal service terminology (e.g., “information and referral”); they call with specific needs that staff translate into service categories.
- Patrick proposed reconvening the SPIL committee at least every other month to measure progress and plan for the upcoming SPIL amendment. Letty and Roxanne agreed. Amanda will coordinate scheduling.
- Patrick requested ALLH’s support group calendar be distributed broadly and expressed interest in unified social media coordination across SILC and the two centers.

## **Community Reports**

### **Citizens for a Fair ADA Ride – Donald Sakamoto, President**

- Quarterly meeting held February 19, 2026 at Hub Center, 9:45–11:45 AM. Attendees included Patrick Gartside, Amanda Lowe, Department of Transportation Services, and representatives from HandiVan, Skyline, and TheBus.
- Primary issue: Skyline Airport station at Daniel K. Inouye Airport lacks adequate accessibility for blind individuals. A blind vendor reported no signage or assistance between the station and terminal. Shuttle service from rail to airport exists but is not widely known. Steven Neese (Department of Transportation) stated improvements are planned for May 2026.
- Donald suggested audio cues (e.g., distinct tones for entry/exit, similar to BART in San Francisco) and audio feedback when tapping transit cards.
- Bill 54-2026: HandiVan fares increase from \$2.25 to \$2.50 each way effective July 1, 2026 (signed by Mayor). Existing tickets at the \$2.25 rate must be redeemed by June 3, 2026.
- Next Citizens for a Fair ADA Ride quarterly meeting: May 2026.

- Brian Hauser confirmed Donald is coordinating with Brian Mick of DCAB on rail accessibility signage.
- Patrick noted the preferred terminology is “low vision” and “no vision” rather than “visually impaired.”

### **Disability Communication Access Board (DCAB) – Christine Pagano and Brian Mick**

Brian Mick presented five active bills DCAB is monitoring and supporting. Public comment on universal changing station technology standards is due April 20, 2026 to the U.S. Access Board.

- SB 2268 (SD1) – Universal Changing Stations: Requires at least one adult changing table in new construction designed after July 31, 2027, for all public entities and Title III private entities. Supported by DCAB and DD Council.
- HB 2443 (HD1) / SB 2936 (SD1) – Disaster Services: Integrates disability needs into HiEMA emergency planning and establishes a disability integration specialist position (\$100,000 salary + \$100,000 operating, currently removed from bill but being advocated for). HiEMA is supportive.
- HB 2442 (HD1) / SB 2936 (SD1) – Accessible Parking: Effective July 1, 2027, increases required accessible parking spaces and improves van-accessible space ratios in lots with 25+ spaces covered by ADA Title II or III.
- HB 1531 (HD1) / SB 2109 (SD1) – Emergency Announcements: Requires ASL interpreter with full visibility during official emergency broadcasts via TV or internet. Requires picture-in-picture (PIP) window. Informed by challenges during COVID, the Lahaina fires, and the tsunami evacuation.

#### Discussion:

- Nani Watanabe asked for clarification on the changing stations bill scope (applies to future construction; builds a network over time) and thanked DCAB for the parking and ASL interpreter bills.
- Donald Sakamoto asked about funding for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency disability integration specialist. Brian Mick confirmed the \$100,000/\$100,000 figure is being advocated to be restored.
- Brian Hauser asked about parking enforcement. Brian Mick noted enforcement is a weak spot; Honolulu has one volunteer special enforcement officer (down significantly from 10 years ago). The legislature increased fines last session. Brian Hauser suggested expanding the program to neighbor islands.
- Brian Hauser asked whether the accessible traffic signals bill is statewide or Honolulu-only. Brian Mick was unsure and agreed to follow up via Amanda Lowe.

- Donald commended Brian Hauser for his testimony on Bill 1820-2026 (height limitations for walk-up apartments) at City Council.

### **Leadership in Disabilities and Achievement of Hawaii (LDAH) – Noe de la Vega**

- LDAH falls under the Office of Special Education Programs. Current federal Department of Education changes have not yet affected services; families are being reassured.
- Continuing outreach, advocacy, and training for parents, professionals, and community organizations.
- Conducting vision, hearing, and developmental screenings on Hawaii Island and Kauai, primarily in preschools. Families are supported through screening, parent training, and navigation of the DOE/Individualized Education Program system.
- Upcoming: SPIN Conference; Maui and Hawaii Island Footsteps to Transition fairs.

#### Discussion:

- Jodi Asato asked about resources for families of newborns identified as deaf, noting declining enrollment at the Maui Deaf school and concern that families may not be offered the full range of options. She advocated for positive framing when communicating a deafness diagnosis and for home visiting support from birth through age five or six. Noe clarified that LDAH is a community-based organization (not the DOE itself); when screenings flag a concern, resources and support are offered, but follow-through is parent-driven.

### **Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC) – Louis Erteschik, Director**

- FY 2026 budget cleared, signed by the President; award notices issued. Organization is fully operational. FY 2027 planning underway; Louis will be in Washington, D.C. in late April for Hill visits with the Hawaii delegation.
- Ben, a new HDRC staff member, will begin attending SILC meetings regularly following a conversation with Amanda Lowe at Developmental Disabilities Day at the Capitol (January 14, 2026).
- Active legislative priorities: universal changing stations; income disregard expansion (eliminating the 138% poverty cap under Cal's Law so Medicaid waiver recipients can earn at their full potential); disability notification for law enforcement interactions; emergency communications (ASL interpreters); HiEMA disability integration specialist; and accessible traffic signals (with Hawaii Association of the Blind and Appleseed).

- Legislative momentum is positive at the session's halfway point; most supported bills are advancing, some with amendments.
- HDRC and SILC have been collaborating on Dillingham Boulevard construction accessibility. A HART meeting was held ~2 months prior; a planned walkthrough was postponed when the group grew too large. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for the coming week. Louis expressed confidence that HART is genuinely engaged.

Discussion:

- Brian Hauser asked whether the accessible traffic signals bill is statewide. Louis believes so but will confirm and follow up.
- Donald Sakamoto reported that he and Annette Tashiro visited the Dillingham site on February 20, 2026, meeting with a blind resident and the NAN Corporation project engineer. He also raised the accessibility issue at the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting on January 14, noting third-phase rail construction includes inaccessible stairs. Louis confirmed he is pressing HART to be inclusive in the walkthrough; Nestor Garcia (Rep. Ed Case's staff) is also pressing HART to resolve the situation.

## **SILC Reports**

### **SILC Activity Report – Q1 FY 2026 (October–December 2025) – Amanda Lowe**

Highlights by SPIL goal:

- Goal 1 (IL Network): Participated in DD legislative forums across all islands; joined LDAH Mini Conference; attended a health fair.
- Goal 2 (Emerging Issues): Collected surveys at DD forums; participated in White Cane Walk and Capitol resource fair; attended ATRC Advisory Council meeting.
- Goal 3 (Systems Change): Members attended National Federation of the Blind Hawaii Annual Convention and advocated for accessible pedestrian signals; staff wrote letters regarding U.S. DOE reductions in force; SILC hosted the Citizens for a Fair ADA Ride quarterly meeting; members attended bi-monthly No Wrong Door meetings.
- Goal 4 (Disaster Access): Attended Kaneohe/Kahalu'u CERT monthly meetings; participated in Ko'olau Resilience Hub Symposium; conducted outreach at Windward Buddhist Temple; member participated in a monthly CERT phone tree/family communication exercise.

### **SPIL Committee – Amanda Lowe**

The committee met once and received ACL approval to proceed with substantive amendments (requiring public hearings). As discussed earlier, the committee will reconvene every other month to track progress and plan for the next SPIL cycle.

### **Community Needs Assessment Committee – Amanda Lowe**

Met once. Follow-up meeting planned for late March; CIL executive directors will be invited. Key feedback: shorter assessments have higher completion rates. Committee will continue development and report back.

### **Financial Report – Annette Tashiro**

- Current balance (as of March 4, 2026): \$213,315.
- Q1 FY 2026 (Oct–Dec 2025): Income \$25,403; expenses \$24,618 (~half wages, ~\$2,500 travel).
- Total assets: \$206,978; liabilities: ~\$700 (RAMP credit card); equity: ~\$206,276.
- Finance Committee is developing a revised budget aligned with council activities, to be updated with the upcoming SPIL amendment. Bookkeeper Kimberly Roth is available for questions by email.

### **Policies and Procedures Committee – Philip Ana**

Philip provided an overview of the draft manual covering financial procedures, member roles, and liability protections, developed with Annette Tashiro, Amanda Lowe, and Catia Garell. Document was distributed to council members at the prior two meetings.

### **Advocacy Committee – Philip Ana**

- Shared National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Grassroots program webinar information with council members; encouraged sign-up to connect with other advocates.
- Monitoring HR1 (“Big Beautiful Bill”) and HUD cuts to consumer protections; sharing updates via Justice for All network.
- Tracking information from Senators Schatz and Hirono and Representative Tokuda; forwarding town hall and engagement opportunities to council members.

- Philip and Vickie Kennedy submitted testimony on the ABLE savings program bill through Hawaii Association of the Blind; bill is moving to the Senate. Also supporting the Braille bill (would allow DOE students to learn Braille).
- SILC's focus this year: follow established advocacy organizations' lead while providing testimony support on key bills including income disregard, emergency preparedness ASL signer, and accessible pedestrian signals.
- Philip noted that NICL President Theo Brady sent a message on home and community-based services (HCBS) and misinterpretation of Medicaid waiver needs; a video and written information will be shared with Maui and neighbor island disability groups.

### **Membership Committee – Philip Ana**

Philip reported on a meeting with Wendy Kondo at the Governor's office (January 14, 2026, with Patrick Gartside and Amanda Lowe):

- Philip Ana, Patrick Gartside, Brian Hauser, and Donald Sakamoto will have their terms extended from two to three years.
- Leah Dias (DSE) cleared as ex-officio member.
- New member applications submitted/cleared: Roy Corpus (Hawaii Island), Lehua Chang, and Leticia Zuno.

### **Learning from Others: Independent Living on Maui – Nani Watanabe**

Nani provided an overview of Independent Living history and active disability community groups on Maui:

- Legacy of Maui Center for Independent Living (MCIL): Founded by Mikey Tomita, a Deaf community leader, MCIL served Maui for 25+ years as the primary hub for disability advocacy. Mikey's training model required all staff to master every service and understand diverse disability experiences.
- Maui Deaf Friends: Meets monthly; fully self-led by deaf individuals (officers, agenda, minutes, EIN). Advocates for flashing crosswalk lights, accessible doorbells, and fire alarms. Challenges include ASL interpreter shortage and unreliable VRI due to Wi-Fi issues. Members have aged into senior programs but are not always receiving appropriate supports.
- Maui Wheelers: Grassroots peer support group founded 2008 under CIL. Key challenges: reduced home health care hours due to insurance/budget cuts. Past activities **include adaptive** paddling with Kihei Canoe Club (modified canoe for wheelchair users). Members actively report accessibility barriers to the county and state.

- Goal: Host a disability symposium on Maui featuring lived experience stories. Nani noted the ongoing need for a physical IL hub and more training resources on Maui.

## **Old Business**

### **Reconstitution of the Mayor's Committee**

Tabled to the next monthly meeting.

## **New Business**

### **Adoption of Policies and Procedures Manual**

**Motion:** Jodi Asato moved to approve the Policies and Procedures Manual.

**Second:** Nani Watanabe

**Result:** Unanimous approval. Manual adopted as a living document; will be posted on the SILC website.

### **Vote on New Council Members**

Philip Ana named the following individuals for approval: Roy Corpus, Lehua Chang (new members), and Leah Dias (ex-officio/DSE).

**Motion:** Donald Sakamoto moved to approve the four new/ex-officio council members.

**Second:** Brian Hauser

**Result:** Unanimous approval

### **Legislative Bills for SILC to Monitor**

Amanda Lowe reported that a bill tracking list was distributed to council members. Most bills were covered in community partner reports. SILC will track and provide testimony support as opportunities arise; bill status will be reported at future meetings.

### **SB 3244 – SILC Codification**

A bill to codify SILC in statute was introduced this session. SILC, DVR, and the DD Council jointly recommended deferral to allow time to work with DVR and the community to ensure correct drafting with no unintended consequences. A meeting with DVR will be scheduled.

## **National Conference Participation**

Patrick proposed sending up to four council members to three national conferences: NASSILC, NCIL (July 20–23), and APRIL, funded from SILC reserves up to \$12,000.

**Motion:** Donald Sakamoto moved to approve up to four council members and up to \$12,000 from reserves for national conference attendance.

**Second:** Judy Guajardo

**Result:** Unanimous approval. Note: NASSILC (March 16–19) will not be attended this cycle as it arose too quickly.

## **Accessible Technology Procurement**

Patrick proposed purchasing a JAWS screen reader and Braille embosser for SILC use in outreach and council operations, funded from reserves up to \$8,000.

**Motion:** Brian Hauser moved to approve up to \$8,000 from reserves for accessible technology procurement.

**Second:** Donald Sakamoto

**Result:** Unanimous approval

## **Public Comment**

- ALLH visitor suggested that remote speakers enable their cameras so deaf attendees can identify who is speaking, and that the interpreter window be enlarged for in-person attendees.
- Lehua Chang requested confirmation that questions may be submitted by email after the meeting. Confirmed: contact Amanda Lowe.
- Mikey Tomita shared information about live captioning apps (e.g., Google Live Caption) as a tool for seniors and deaf individuals who use speech and advocated for future sign-to-speech technology development.

## **Adjournment**

**Motion:** Donald Sakamoto moved to adjourn.

**Second:** Brian Hauser

**Result:** Motion passes unanimously.

*Meeting adjourned at 12:03*