

Meeting Minutes

Date: December 4, 2025

Time: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Location (Zoom): Hybrid meeting via Zoom

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

1. Call to Order -- Philip Ana

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM. Philip Ana (Vice Chair) facilitated the meeting with Patrick Gartside's(Chair) assistance on technology.

2. Roll Call/Introductions

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Members Present:

- Patrick Gartside, SILC Member (Chair)
- Philip Ana, SILC Member (Vice Chair) - Meeting Facilitator
- Donald Sakamoto, SILC Member (Secretary)
- Annette Tashiro, SILC Member (Treasurer)
- Catia Garell, SILC Member (left approximately 10:00 AM, returned 10:30 AM)
- Judy Guajardo, SILC Member - via Zoom
- Nani Watanabe, SILC Member - via Zoom
- Letty Zuno, SILC Member (Ex-Officio) - via Zoom
- Valerie Janikowski, SILC Member - via Zoom (left approximately 2:25 PM)

SILC Members Absent:

- Jodi Asato - Excused Absence
- Brian Hauser - Excused Absence
- Vickie Kennedy - Excused Absence

Staff:

- Amanda Lowe, Executive Director

Guests:

- Cheryl Matthews, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Lea Dias, DVR - partial attendance - via Zoom
- Roxanne Untalan Bolden, Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) - via Zoom
- Jen Brazee, Assistive Technology Resource Centers (ATRC) - representing Jodi Asato - via Zoom
- Brian Mick, Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) - via Zoom
- Kristine Pagano, Interim Executive Director, DCAB - via Zoom
- Chassidy Kruse, Leadership in Disabilities and Achievement of Hawaii (LDAH) - via Zoom
- Noe Dela Vega, LDAH - via Zoom
- Zos Arista, Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council)
- Lou Erteschik, Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC) - via zoom
- Peter Edmondson, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disability Integration Advisor - via Zoom
- American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters: Carrie Sarver, Regina Sapko - via Zoom

3. Review 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, deserving of equal opportunity to decide how to live, work, and participate in their communities.”

4. Approval of Agenda

Agenda was amended to confirm FEMA presentation and add Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC) presentation by Jen Brazee.

Motion: Philip Ana motioned to accept the agenda as amended

Second: Annette Tashiro

Result: Unanimous approval

5. Approval of November 6, 2025 Minutes

Motion: Annette Tashiro motioned to approve minutes

Second: Donald Sakamoto

Result: Unanimous approval

6. Center for Independent Living (CIL) Reports

6a. Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) -- Roxanne Untalan Bolden

Roxanne highlighted AILH's support groups across the islands:

Big Island (4 groups):

- **Mixed Group:** Peer support group for adults with various disabilities
- **Life Choices:** Support group for women sharing life experiences navigating personal growth, independence, and daily challenges
- **Diversity Group:** For LGBTQ+ community members; family-style safe environment where everyone can be their authentic selves
- **Supporting and Helping Each Other (Chuukese name):** NEW - First Micronesian peer support group focusing on English learning, community connections, and activities that strengthen confidence

Oahu:

- **Hui Malama Po'o:** Traumatic brain injury (TBI) group focusing on crafting as cognitive therapy, emotional/peer support, community education about neurotrauma, creating handmade crafts to sustain activities, and encouraging independence and social connection

Maui:

- **Hikino:** Individuals with various disabilities for fellowship, social connection, and peer support

Molokai:

- **Ikeloa:** For individuals with various disabilities seeking fellowship, emotional support, and community connection

Kauai:

- **Laulima Peer Support Group:** Welcoming space for individuals with disabilities to connect, share experiences, and support one another

Lanai:

- **NEW support group starting:** Nehua will be starting a support group on Lanai (requires ferry travel). Partnering with multiple organizations who requested this.

Student Interns: AILH has hosted two doctoral physical therapy students from Creighton University. Kai (Maui native) completed presentations on Maui, Molokai, and Lanai and noted service fragmentation on Maui. Current intern Jada (Oahu-based) is working on a statewide project focusing on home safety, and will create educational videos with 'Olelo with captioning and audio description for accessibility.

Fundraising: AILH participated in Foodland Give Aloha and Panda Express fundraisers (did not meet 100-person minimum for Panda Express). Additional fundraisers scheduled for December on Oahu and Big Island. In communication with Smith Charitable Trust hoping to acquire \$75,000 to sustain transportation program in Hilo. Through Borealis Foundation, purchased an accessible van with lift; second van (without lift) serves Kau, a rural area on Big Island. Transportation program created during COVID through Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Micronesian Outreach: Staff member Kamarmina speaks Chuukese and can accompany community members to benefits appointments. AILH brochures available in Chuukese, Marshallese, Japanese, Hawaiian, and Tagalog. Each Micronesian culture (Chuukese, Palauan, Marshallese, Yapese) is distinct with different hierarchical systems.

Q&A:

- **Donald Sakamoto:** Asked about status of Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities on Big Island with new mayor. Roxanne will follow up with staff.
- **Amanda Lowe:** Noted the variety and tailored nature of support groups. Roxanne confirmed attendance is strong; photos posted on AILH social media. The Chuukese group was well attended by community members who previously didn't know about Independent Living (IL) services.

6b. Access to Independence -- Letty Zuno

Letty provided an overview of Access to Independence's six programs:

- **Homeward Bound Transition Initiative:** Works with people in institutions (e.g., skilled nursing facilities) to develop transition plans back into the community. Services include housing navigation, minor home modifications, benefits counseling, 90-day case management, and peer support groups to decrease isolation for those who have lost connections with friends and family.
- **One Step at a Time Youth Transition and Diversion Program:** Serves youth ages 14-24 with two pathways: higher education or direct employment/vocational support. Provides independent

living skills training (credit scores, banking, financial literacy, cost of living, moving out of parents' home for first time), transportation training including driving simulator for those eligible at age 16 to prepare for motor vehicle exam.

- **Benefits, Options, and Counseling Program:** Assists with maximizing healthcare benefits through deep dive into insurance coverage, durable medical equipment (DME) advocacy, and Social Security applications from initial application through appeals to final award.
- **Emergency and Resilience Response Program:** Workshop-based program teaching emergency preparedness and helping participants build personalized resiliency backpacks with items tailored to their specific disability.
- **Access to the Ballot Program:** Advocacy program around voting, teaching the importance of voting, how government works, ballot registration requirements, and reminding people to update registration each time they move.
- **Stepping Stones Diversion Initiative:** Works with people at risk of institutionalization to prevent placement. Includes home safety fall prevention assessments covering entry, common living areas, kitchen, and bathroom. Services include portable ramps and minor home modifications based on assessment and disability needs.

Strategic Planning: Access to Independence is working on their 5-year strategic plan with board members including Philip Ana. Initial focus group held with staff and strategic planning committee members. Full report being prepared for upcoming board meeting.

Fundraiser: Annual Care Basket fundraiser has raised \$5,481.54 to date, providing holiday meals to families.

Q&A:

- **Donald Sakamoto:** Asked about staffing changes at Honolulu office since Leelyn Brady left. Letty confirmed there is currently no program manager. Calls are answered by Executive Information and Assistance Coordinator Daniela. Donald reported voicemail was full when he tried calling; Letty will investigate and noted Donald can contact her directly.
- **Amanda Lowe:** Thanked Letty for the comprehensive overview of all six programs, noting it was very helpful for understanding how Access to Independence works. Expressed particular appreciation for the youth financial training component, noting the great need for credit score and debt education among young people.

7. Community Reports

7a. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) -- Lea Dias/Cheryl Matthews

Lea Dias thanked the SILC and Centers for Independent Living for their important community work. Discussion about coordinating reports to be more pertinent to independent living. Note: A meeting is scheduled for the following day regarding Part B and Part C funding for CIL executive directors and SILC.

7b. State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council) -- Zos Arista

Zos presented the DD Council's six legislative initiatives for 2026:

- **Smart 911 Accessibility Expansion Program:** Mandate statewide 911 integration across counties and multi-unit housing. Smart 911 is a free application where users enter health information that populates for emergency responders nationwide when 911 is called.
- **Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Position Coordinator:** Establish full-time position at Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) for disability representation in emergency planning.
- **Statewide Adult Changing Tables:** Install heavy-duty adult changing tables in public restrooms to support wheelchair and walker users.
- **Medicaid Buy-In Program:** Allow working adults with disabilities to buy into Medicaid if they earn too much to qualify automatically.
- **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Screening:** Require screening and supports for individuals in the correctional system.
- **Community Care Foster Family Home Inclusion:** Ensure individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) who qualify for intermediate or nursing facility care can choose to live in community care foster family homes while remaining in their waiver program.

Discussion: Donald Sakamoto asked about Trapeze paratransit scheduling system complaints. The DD Council has received approximately 10 complaints regarding Holo Card tap-and-pay issues and scheduling difficulties.

7c. Citizens for a Fair Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Ride (CFADAR) -- Donald Sakamoto

Donald reported on the November 20, 2025 CFADAR meeting held at Hub Coworking Hawaii. Key issues discussed:

- **Rail Station Accessibility:** Blind individual Stan Young reported difficulty navigating from the airport rail station to the airport terminal. No accessible signage, no ac outlets to charge your cell phones inside the

stations, and the wiki-wiki shuttle stop lacks a proper driveway for accessible boarding.

- **Trapeze Scheduling System:** Implemented November 7, 2024. Creates inconvenient pickup times (e.g., 7:46 AM or 8:20 AM instead of 8:00 AM) making medical appointments difficult.
- **Dillingham Boulevard ADA Concerns:** Ongoing accessibility issues with rail construction.

Mayor Blangiardi acknowledged accessibility problems at rail stations during a recent radio appearance.

Break

10-minute break taken. Meeting resumed for the Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) report.

7d. Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) -- Kristine Pagano/Brian Mick

Kristine Pagano (Interim Executive Director) and Brian Mick provided DCAB updates:

- **Passing of Kirby Shaw:** DCAB announced the passing of longtime disability advocate Kirby Shaw. Lou Erteschik from HDRC shared that Kirby was a dear friend known for decades who interned at HDRC after attending law school later in life.
- **Smart 911 Resources:** Shared links to Smart 911 information (smart911.com) and encouraged sign-up.
- **Administrative Directive:** Brian Mick shared link to new administrative directive.
- **April 2026 Department of Justice (DOJ) Compliance:** Discussion about upcoming DOJ ADA compliance deadline.

7e. Leadership in Disabilities and Achievement of Hawaii (LDAH) -- Chassidy Kruse/Noe Dela Vega

Chassidy reported on the Traveling Mini-Conference held in Hilo, Kona, Kauai, Molokai, and Oahu. These conferences invite resources to share about programs for families and children with disabilities. Maui conference rescheduled to February 14, 2026 at Cameron Center. No Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) services are affected at this time despite federal uncertainty. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has seen significant staffing reductions, but no additional information received regarding Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center funding.

7f. Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC) -- Lou Erteschik

Lou Erteschik, Director, reported on the federal government shutdown's impact on HDRC:

- HDRC is approximately 90% federally funded with 9-10 different grants
- During the shutdown, HDRC stopped taking new cases and worked only on existing cases
- Some funding (Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI), Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PADD) grants) still has not come through even after government reopening
- HDRC applied for and received Act 310 state funding for nonprofits impacted by federal cuts
- Concerns about potential government shutdown at end of January; hoping for full appropriation
- President's budget proposed cutting half of Protection and Advocacy (P&A) funding; House and Senate committees recommended level funding

Ongoing Work: HDRC continues special education advocacy (Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)), DD waiver navigation (noting increased service reductions and waiver transfers), investigation into state hospital patient transfers to South Carolina, and rail construction ADA concerns. Lou expressed desire to increase involvement with SILC.

8. Learning from Each Other: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disability Integration -- Peter Edmondson

Peter Edmondson, FEMA Disability Integration Advisor based on Maui, presented on the Maui wildfire disaster recovery housing program:

- **Current Status:** Direct Housing Program (temporary housing units) is set to end February 10, 2026. State has submitted request for one-year extension; awaiting determination from FEMA headquarters and United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
- **Housing Impact:** Maui fires destroyed 10 of 14 multifamily affordable housing units on Maui, significantly impacting people with disabilities who relied on that housing.
- **Section 8 Vouchers:** Currently not open on Maui, presenting problems for survivors. Some are looking at other islands.
- **5% Mobility/2% Communication Requirement:** Unclear how new housing units are monitoring ADA-required accessible unit percentages.
- **Advocacy Goal:** Pushing for prioritization of people with disabilities and kupuna in housing selection.
- **Statewide Impact:** FEMA is supporting survivors on other islands as well; program ending affects all islands.

Discussion: Judy Guajardo noted that typical housing wait times for disabled and aging on Maui are 8-10 years. Nani Watanabe thanked Peter for supporting the Deaf community and individuals with disabilities.

Peter noted he is based on Maui and will continue working even if the housing program ends. Contact: peter.edmondson@fema.dhs.gov, 808-399-3441.

9. SILC Reports

9a. SILC Activities Report -- Amanda Lowe

Amanda reported on council activities aligned with SILC's four goals:

Goal 1 - Enhancing the Impact of Independent Living:

- Monthly SILC meeting conducted
- Executive committee conducted six-month review
- Maui members attended partner meetings: Maui Deaf Friends, Maui State Advisory Council (SAC), Maui Wheelers, Na Hoa Aloha
- Na Hoa Aloha reported 298 service activities totaling 584 volunteer hours supporting kupuna and persons with disabilities
- Oahu members attended Hawaii Association of the Blind (HAB) banquet with over 100 participants

Goal 2 - Inform and Guide Response to Emerging Disability Issues:

- Members attended ATRC Advisory Council meeting (November 6)
- Housing development presentation (November 12) sponsored by Pacific Housing Assistance Corporation and Lanakila Pacific

Goal 3 - Enhancing System Change for Inclusive Communities:

- Donald Sakamoto hosted Citizens for a Fair ADA Ride meeting (November 20)
- Members attended Access Unlocked 18th Annual Mini Conference
- National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Chapter Meeting
- DCAB General Meeting

Goal 4 - Access to Community Resources During Disasters:

- Kaneohe-Kahaluu Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Holiday Luncheon and 2026 planning meeting (November 14)
- Koolau Resilience Hub Symposium - provided feedback on educating and empowering communities to support neighbors with disabilities during disasters

9b. State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) Committee -- Patrick Gartside

The SPIL committee met once to discuss amendments to the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025-2027 plan. Proposed amendments were submitted to Administration for Community Living (ACL) program officer just

before government shutdown. Awaiting response. Cheryl Matthews (DVR) requested to be included in SPIL committee meetings to coordinate with Unified State Plan (USP) updates (internal submission mid-January, final needed February for March implementation).

9c. Community Needs Assessment -- Amanda Lowe

No submissions received on the online community needs assessment this quarter. Survey committee reviewing examples from other states with technical assistance from Independent Living Technical Assistance (ILTA) Center (Carrie Cohen, California).

In-person disability questionnaire results (20 responses from neighbor island outreach):

- **Top 3 concerns:** Housing (60% of respondents), Transportation, Accessibility
- **Other concerns:** Care attendants, income, employment
- Housing, transportation, and accessibility together account for 45% of all responses

9d. Financial Report -- Annette Tashiro

Annette presented the October financial summary:

- Beginning Balance: \$168,007
- Ending Balance: \$195,424
- Average Balance: \$168,421
- Total Additions: \$34,501 (quarterly payment received)
- Total Expenditures: \$7,084
- November Bank Statement Ending Balance: \$188,663

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Conference Expenses (Old Business): Total cost for 4 people to attend Washington, D.C. conference was \$8,848.42, including airfare, ground transportation, meals, lodging, and registration. This was under the \$14,000 budget.

9e. Policies and Procedures Committee -- Amanda Lowe

The committee met once in person (July) and has been trading drafts. Received technical assistance from ILTA Center. The draft is out for review to the committee. Goal to have one more meeting before the end of year to bring the draft to the January board meeting for review.

10. Old Business

10a. Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities -- Donald Sakamoto

Efforts continue to restore the Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities. Patrick and Donald will draft a letter to Managing Director Mike Formby to schedule a meeting in January. Multiple accessibility issues requiring attention: Dillingham Boulevard construction ADA violations, Honolulu Skyline Rail Station airport accessibility, and city housing development accessibility.

10b. Grants in Aid (GIA) -- Patrick Gartside

After evaluation, SILC decided not to apply for City/County GIA this cycle. Still laying groundwork and establishing policies. Will consider state GIA when available.

11. New Business

11a. Review of 990 Filing -- Patrick Gartside

SILC was under the threshold for full 990 and filed 990-EZ with AOK Certified Public Accountants (CPAs). Key highlights:

- Strong financial year - successfully paid off \$40,000 in payroll liabilities
- Ended year with strong cash surplus
- Total grant/contract income: \$181,713
- Nearly 100% reliant on state pass-through funding - need to diversify
- Spent less on programs than received - need to plan deployment of surplus

990 submitted to Internal Revenue Service (IRS); still need to submit to Attorney General Taxes and Charities Division (now required since SILC registered to solicit charitable contributions).

Clarification from Cheryl Matthews (DVR): SILC funding is a combination of VR110 federal dollars and state match, not Independent Living Part B (ILB) funds. All ILB funds go to the CILs through the SPIL process.

11b. Legislative Establishment of SILC -- Amanda Lowe

SILC is considering pursuing legislation to move establishment from executive order into state statute (Chapter 348, Vocational Rehabilitation section, following State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)). Benefits include:

- Stronger legal foundation
- Protection from administration changes
- Clear statutory authority

Draft bill and one-pager prepared. Would be presented as housekeeping item with no cost to state. Consulting with Zos from DD Council on legislative process. Will need to identify a sponsor.

12. Announcements and Public Testimony

Martin Luther King Day Parade (Donald Sakamoto): January 19, 2026 - parade from Magic Island to Kapiolani Park. NFB Hawaii participates annually.

Transit Accommodation Day (Donald Sakamoto): February 4, 2026 - honors Rosa Parks and civil rights. Many major cities provide free transit rides. Working with city to increase recognition.

Maui Updates (Nani Watanabe):

- Maui Wheelers holiday celebration scheduled with 28 participants (wheelchair users and aides)
- Maui Deaf Friends organizing Mr. and Mrs. Deaf Santa at Ka'ahumanu Shopping Center for two weekends
- Planning disability community symposium for 2026 featuring panelists sharing life stories and challenges
- Looking for venue and support; SILC offered to help with symposium and send council member to meet support groups
- Challenges: Need central meeting location, many community members lack computer/internet access or Zoom training

Upcoming Events:

- December 5: State Performance Plan Annual Performance Report event
- December 5: Kupuna Caucus (2-3 PM) with Senator Richard Moriwaki and Representatives
- January 8, 2026: Hawaii Transportation Forum
- January 13, 2026: Hawaii State Reform Health Policy Conference
- January 17, 24, 31: Kaneohe-Kahaluu CERT Training (3-weekend event)

- January 22, 2026: Legislative session opening day

Meeting Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Donald Sakamoto

Second: Nani Watanabe

Result: Motion passes unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 11:58 AM.

Meeting minutes prepared by Amanda Lowe

Finalized by secretary Donald Sakamoto

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year wishes