

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

Date: May 7, 2026

Time: 9:11 AM – 11:01 AM

Location (Zoom): Virtual meeting via Zoom

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

Call to Order – Patrick Gartside

The meeting was called to order at 9:11 AM by Chair Patrick Gartside.

Roll Call / Attendance – Donald Sakamoto

SILC Members Present:

- Philip Ana, SILC Member (Vice Chair)
- Jodi Asato, SILC Member
- Patrick Gartside, SILC Member (Chair)
- Judy Guajardo, SILC Member (joined during roll call)
- Valerie Janikowski, SILC Member (joined late)
- Vickie Kennedy, SILC Member
- Donald Sakamoto, SILC Member (Secretary)
- Annette Tashiro, SILC Member (Treasurer)
- Nani Watanabe, SILC Member

SILC Members Absent:

- Lea Dias, SILC Member
- Catia Garell, SILC Member
- Brian Hauser, SILC Member

Staff:

- Amanda Lowe, Executive Director

Guests:

- Keao Wright, Assistive Technology Resource Centers (Job Access With Speech [JAWS] Trainer)

- Cheryl Matthews, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Interpreters:

- Regina Sapko, American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter
- Katy, Interpreter

Quorum established (7 of 13 members at start).

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. People with disabilities have the right to live in the community of their choice with access to all necessary supports and home and community-based services to sustain living in the community. People with disabilities are the best experts in their own lives and bodies, deserving of equal opportunity to decide how to live, work, and take part in their communities, particularly in reference to services that powerfully affect their day-to-day lives and access to independence.

Approval of Agenda – Patrick Gartside

The Chair thanked Amanda for her help in developing the agenda into a clear, guideline-compliant format. No additions or corrections were raised.

Motion: Nani Watanabe motioned to approve the agenda as is.

Second: Vickie Kennedy

Result: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes

No corrections to the minutes were raised.

Motion: Annette Tashiro motioned to approve the minutes.

Second: Donald Sakamoto

Result: Unanimous approval

SILC Reports

SILC Activities Report – Amanda Lowe

Amanda thanked members for submitting their reports and reminded the council that reports can be brief bullet points, a phone call, or an email. The report was organized according to the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) goals. April was a busy month.

Goal 1: Enhance the Impact of the Independent Living Network

- SILC members attended the monthly SILC Hawai'i meeting and participated in the decision-making process.
- Members attended the Finance Committee meeting, collaborating on solidifying the annual budget for the next fiscal year.
- The State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) Committee held a meeting in April.

Goal 2: Inform and Guide Response to Emerging Disability Issues

- Attended several national webinars and briefings. At the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Grassroots Coffee Chat, a member spoke on legislative fatigue and the importance of self-care.
- Attended a House and Senate briefing on the Hawai'i Hurricane Relief Fund and new Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mapping for coastal and flooding zones.
- Participated in dementia-focused webinars with the National Alzheimer's and Dementia Resource Center, learning about community-based programs for African American elders and previewing a new person-centered training package launching in June.
- Attended the Joint Caregiving and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Advisory Council meeting, where California, Massachusetts, Maryland, and Wisconsin shared models for serving underserved caregiving populations.
- The Survey Committee also met (aligned with Goal 2).

Goal 3: Enhance Systems Change for Inclusive and Accessible Communities

- Attended the Kāne'ohe Town Hall with state legislators and a city council member at Windward Community College.
- A member testified at the Kalihi-Pālama Neighborhood Board regarding unsafe sidewalks, crosswalks, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) violations along the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART) Dillingham Boulevard construction zone.
- A member attended the Kāne'ohe Neighborhood Board, asking the Office of Hawaiian Affairs about programs for disabled youth and raising concerns about non-functioning audible street crossing signals near Windward Mall.

- A member attended the Honolulu Committee on Aging meeting, where it was noted that SILC has been actively working with the City and County on key emergency response areas.
- Two members participated in Part 2 of the Botanic Garden Community Discovery Workshop, providing input on the garden's first-ever master plan.
- Members attended the Tammy Evard Consulting Empowerment Meeting (featuring a self-advocate from Los Angeles), the Administration for Community Living (ACL) Grassroots webinar on House Resolution 1 (HR 1), and a Justice Nation webinar on advocacy strategies for navigating the Social Security Administration system.

Goal 4: Equal Access to Community Resources During Disasters

- Members were active in emergency preparedness work and completed the fourth Ko'olau Hub Community Emergency Action Plan training on community mapping.
- A member worked with the resilience hub coordinator on multiple community emergency action plan worksheets, including data analysis and a hazard assessment in collaboration with Vibrant Hawai'i.

Survey Committee Report – Amanda Lowe

- The Survey Committee met and finalized a draft of the mini-survey for review and vote later in the meeting. The mini-survey is designed to take two minutes, for use at tabling events to give a quick snapshot.
- The committee also reviewed a first draft of the larger Community Needs Assessment survey (separate from the mini-survey).
- The two Centers for Independent Living (CILs) have been active in the committee meetings, providing helpful additional perspective.

SPIL Committee Report – Patrick Gartside

The SPIL Committee – consisting of Patrick, Philip, Amanda, and the new directors of the Centers for Independent Living – met the day prior, met the week before, and will meet again the following Wednesday.

- The committee initially began discussing necessary amendments to the State Plan for Independent Living and has identified areas needing changes.
- The committee is now working through the SPIL's Evaluation section, assessing progress against the three-year plan. SILC will complete its portion and the two CILs will complete theirs.
- The self-evaluations will be compiled into one document to present transparently to the full council at the June meeting, functioning like a report card to guide amendment recommendations.

- Patrick noted the process has generated positive energy and brought SILC and the CILs closer together.

Advocacy Report – Philip Ana

In April, several emails were sent to council members sharing advocacy resources and opportunities (coordinated among Philip, Donald, and Annette):

- A Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center (DETAC) webinar, “Scaling Supported Employment with Large Businesses,” drawing on lessons from Microsoft’s employment evolution. An invitation was extended to the CILs to apply. DETAC has previously provided training on Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) savings accounts.
- The Kūpuna Collective newsletter shared emergency resource information and addressed the quota law.
- Vibrant Hawai‘i shared post-storm preparation guidance with examples of how to prepare before a storm.
- A National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)-hosted webinar, “Telling the Story of Independent Living (IL),” where participants shared insights on independent living and success.
- A Justice for All webinar on Social Security Administration changes and how to navigate services amid office and staff cuts.
- Through the Hawai‘i Association of the Blind (HAB), testimony was provided for Senate Bill (SB) 2420 SD2 HD1 (Audio Pedestrian Signal / pedestrian crossing bill), which passed. Vickie Kennedy was among those who testified.
- A home and community-based services item involving the Access Act and the Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act (Justice for All); Amanda is following up, drawing on her Washington experience and a contact named Sarah.

Legislative Update – Donald Sakamoto:

- House Bill (HB) 1894 (Braille Literacy Bill, providing Braille for students K–12) passed, with a budget of \$3,000. The bill had been deferred to conference committee the prior year.
- SB 2852 (Title III website accessibility for businesses) passed the legislature and awaits the Governor’s signature.

Treasurer’s Report – Annette Tashiro

- Available balance: \$192,214 – a healthy financial position.
- The financial package and supporting strategies all match.

- Members were invited to a Finance Committee meeting on May 14th at 1:00 PM.

Discussion: Community Voice Statewide – Next 6 Months

The Chair introduced a new discussion item to look ahead at the council's future. SILC is roughly halfway through its three-year SPIL period, meaning that in approximately six to eight months the council will begin drafting a new State Plan for Independent Living, which requires substantial community data.

Key Points and Member Input:

- The Community Needs Assessment survey is nearly finished (one or two more committee meetings, then a council vote to approve). The short survey is also nearly ready.
- SILC needs to get surveys into the hands of community members through networks such as HAB, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), and the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council.
- The Survey Committee shifted from monthly to biweekly meetings to accelerate work on the Community Needs Assessment.
- Philip emphasized the survey is what drives the data and stressed the importance of holding meetings on the neighbor islands to reach communities not yet heard from (Maui, then Hawai'i Island).
- Nani Watanabe (Maui) affirmed that neighbor island and in-person meetings make a big difference and that each island is unique.
- Patrick noted the original community survey came from California (built in an inaccessible SurveyMonkey format) and was made accessible when adapted, but questioned its value; he is excited for the committee's improved survey.
- Patrick proposed considering an incentive for completing the survey (e.g., stickers, a t-shirt, or a \$5 Amazon card), to be funded from reserve funds rather than the operating budget.
- Vickie Kennedy offered to work with Philip and "Art" to bring the survey to Hawaii Association of the Blind (HAB) members as an add-on session, noting many members do not use computers.
- Nani described that many in the Deaf community do not complete forms online and rely on hard copy, photos of flyers, text communication, and in-person assistance; interpretation is often needed to explain questions.
- Annette Tashiro agreed that focus groups in different communities may work better – SILC should go out to people rather than expecting people to come to them.
- Donald asked about Deaf-Blind community needs; Nani noted most Deaf-Blind students attend school in Honolulu, and getting information to parents in the schools remains a challenge.

- Patrick suggested multiple flexible approaches: a website sign-up for one-on-one interview sessions, a phone option, and focus groups.
- Autumn Louise (Deaf Center) and an advocate with the last name Newman were identified as potential resources for the Deaf-Blind population.
- Valerie Janikowski (via comment) suggested an incentive of a charitable donation per completed survey; the idea of donating \$1 per short survey or \$5 per long survey to the distributing organization was discussed.
- Nani shared her two-year advocacy effort on language access for a Deaf individual, ultimately resolved by filing with Civil Rights, underscoring the ongoing need for advocacy.
- Donald asked whether surveys could be offered in multiple languages (e.g., Korean, Japanese), referencing Title VI language requirements; Amanda noted the draft assessment asks about primary language and communication, and the committee will explore feasibility.
- Jodi confirmed (via chat) that the mini-survey would be voted on at this meeting and would be appropriate for the upcoming PacRim conference; Aloha Independent Living Hawaii is tabling and willing to share the survey.
- The committee discussed adding a Quick Response (QR) code to the survey so people can complete it on their phones.

Break

Approximately 10-minute break taken at 9:58 AM.

Old Business

Reconstitution of the Honolulu Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities

- Patrick sent a letter to the Managing Director of the Mayor's Office (Director Formby) on April 15th and followed up the subsequent week. Staff deferred, advising SILC to wait for the Mayor to return from China.
- The Mayor is now back in town; SILC hopes to secure a call this week and a meeting with the Mayor's Office soon.
- Donald thanked Amanda for her letter (which referenced comparable committees in other cities and states and on Hawai'i's neighbor islands) and Patrick for submitting it. Donald noted he and Annette have been working to bring this committee back since 2022.
- The council discussed potential next steps should the effort stall.

National Conference Participation

Up to four members per conference were previously approved.

- National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Conference, July 20–23, Washington, D.C.: Patrick, Annette, and Nani are attending the full conference. SILC secured the early-bird rate (\$300) and member discount.
- Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) Conference, October 23–25, Niagara Falls, New York: Patrick, Bill, Donald, Annette, and Nani expressed interest; the list will be narrowed with further discussion.

New Business

Next Quarterly Meeting – June 4, 2026 (Hawai‘i Island)

- The next quarterly meeting is set for Thursday, June 4, 2026, on Hawai‘i Island. A site is being secured (Hilo or Kona to be determined), along with flyers and interpreters.
- Contacts include Julia from the DD Council, the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), and Roxanne (who provided venue feedback).
- SILC plans to send a flyer in advance for RSVPs and to host a small lunch after the meeting to spend time with the Hawai‘i Island community.
- Members interested in attending in person: Donald Sakamoto, Judy Guajardo, Annette Tashiro, Vickie Kenneday, and Nani Watanabe (Cheryl Matthews also requested to attend).
- Amanda will send a follow-up email to confirm attendance and offer to make travel arrangements; members may also book and submit for reimbursement (no first class unless necessary).
- Vickie Kennedy noted a preference for Southwest over Hawaiian due to guide dog bulkhead seating policies.
- Jodi will ask Jen (who lives on Hawai‘i Island) to attend in person. Vickie noted Teachers for the Visually Impaired (TVIs) on Hawai‘i Island as potential attendees; a larger room (capacity ~40) will be needed.
- Patrick will be traveling and unable to attend the June meeting in person.

Social Media Outreach Update

Kylie, SILC’s website contractor, has been developing the social media outreach (Instagram and Facebook). The accounts may not be live yet; links will be sent to everyone once active so members can follow SILC.

SILC Collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) – Patrick Gartside

SILC is a mandated partner of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) under Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act. Patrick currently serves as SRC Vice Chair and on its Membership and State Plan committees.

- The SRC Unified State Plan Committee recommended that Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) work with SILC on community disability outreach.
- The SRC is in a position similar to where SILC was several years ago – no website and no central place to store documents, with materials passed from chair to chair. The Designated State Entity (DSE) representative role passed from Greg to Cheryl Matthews.
- As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, SILC receives no-cost Google and Microsoft resources; Patrick hopes to leverage these to help the SRC organize its data (email, document storage, website).
- SILC met with the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) about possibilities, noting other states' SRCs have websites and useful tools.
- The next SRC meeting is May 19th (approximately 10:00 AM–2:00 PM), in person at Ho'opono (auditorium) and on Zoom. Patrick encouraged SILC members to attend.
- SILC helped produce print, digital, and Braille flyers on what it means to serve on the SRC and the benefits of serving, distributed at tabling events to support recruitment.
- Philip noted the collaboration creates an opportunity to get closer to employment work and connect with training resources like DETAC.

SRC Recruitment Update – Cheryl Matthews (DVR):

- The SRC is a 15-member council currently with three openings: a business representative, a parent information center representative (interest exists), and a Business, Industry and Labor (BIL) position.
- James Montgomery was approved, leaving one current vacancy, with a second anticipated in June.
- The DOE representative (Cynthia) is retiring at the end of June; Cheryl is working with the DOE on an interim replacement.
- Patrick noted the SRC is mandated to be at least 51% people with disabilities, and SILC is working to verify this information internally and proactively.

Review and Adoption of Committee Charters

Several committee charters were attached to the agenda for review. The charters build on the policies and procedures, adding detail on composition, tasks, scope of authority, and meeting structure so future members have a clear picture of how each committee runs. The charters are intended as living documents.

Committees covered by the charters:

- Advocacy
- Data
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Engagement / Membership
- Executive
- Finance
- Policies and Procedures
- State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL)
- Transportation

Each committee will have an assigned chair and at least two council members. The Centers for Independent Living are interested in sending staff to serve as non-voting members, and members of the public may join committees of interest. All committee meetings will be posted on the state calendar six days in advance with agendas and minutes, in compliance with Sunshine Law. Donald Sakamoto expressed interest in the Transportation Committee. Follow-up will include a survey link for members to sign up for committees of interest.

Motion: Nani Watanabe motioned to approve the committee charters.

Second: Seconded

Result: Unanimous approval (Annette Tashiro called for the question)

Review and Adoption of the Mini-Survey

Amanda gave an overview of the draft mini-survey for use at tabling events, designed to take no more than two minutes and written in plain language for accessibility. Questions cover: who the respondent is filling out the survey for; which services are needed but not received (check all that apply); why those services are not being received; how hard it is to get help; which island the respondent lives on; optional contact information; and any additional comments. The vote concerns the content; the survey will be made available in online accessible, large-print, interview, and (eventually) multiple-language formats.

Motion: Annette Tashiro motioned to adopt the mini-survey.

Second: Donald Sakamoto

Result: Unanimous approval

Department of Justice Request for Comments – ADA Web Accessibility Compliance Extension

Donald Sakamoto presented on the Department of Justice (DOJ) request for comments regarding an extension of the compliance deadline for non-discrimination on the basis of disability (Title II web accessibility).

- The original Title II implementation deadline of April 24, 2026 for state and county entities has reportedly been proposed for extension to April 2027.
- Donald cited the difficulty blind individuals face accessing inaccessible government maps (Department of Emergency Management hazard maps, Fire and Police Department crime maps), which lack descriptive information.
- The NFB, under President Mark Riccobono, opposes further extension, viewing it as delaying long-overdue civil rights compliance.
- SB 2852 (Title III) addresses business website and accessibility compliance at the state level.
- Public comment to the DOJ is due June 22, 2026. The council agreed (by general consensus, no vote needed) to draft a SILC comment letter, similar to the process used for the Mayor's Committee letter, and to encourage members to submit individual comments. Amanda will confirm the deadline and begin a draft.

Update on Information Practices / Sunshine Law Compliance

A member of the public raised a question about whether SILC must abide by the Sunshine Law, and the Office of Information Practices (OIP) is working to make a determination.

- OIP requested additional information, including the section of SILC's contract with the Designated State Entity, the original Executive Order establishing SILC (No. 201), and the more recent 2022 Executive Order referencing it.
- SILC located all documents and submitted them to OIP; the council awaits a determination.
- Patrick provided background: OIP previously determined (around 2008) that SILC was not required to follow Sunshine Law, but the executive orders and Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act mandates SILC to operate transparently and follow advance notice and posting practices.
- Executive orders were signed by past Governors (Abercrombie and Ige, among others). Amanda researched the archives; Patrick submitted the appeal.

- SILC will publish all foundational and generated documents on its website to live perpetually in one place and plans to develop a timeline showing the council's evolution, including a period when it was improperly established through legislation and had to be rescinded.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

- Annette Tashiro asked about requesting registration fees for members to attend the Pacific Rim (PacRim) Conference (May 27–30, 2026, at the Campus Center Complex). Registration requests should be sent to Amanda; registration may have closed, and SILC will look into options.
- Nani Watanabe was invited to staff a resource table at a Maui expo on Saturday and will collect contacts/sign-ups for the survey once ready. The council discussed creating tabling kits for Maui and O'ahu (including paper copies of the mini-survey and emergency preparedness materials) so members can participate on short notice. Patrick will send Nani materials, potentially via FedEx for pickup in Kahului.
- Donald Sakamoto announced his April 15th participation for his swearing in for the Honolulu Mayor's Election Advisory Special Needs Committee (mandated by the legislature, with committees in each county). A meeting is tentatively planned for Friday, May 22nd, 1:00–2:30 PM at Honolulu Hale; details and an email blast to follow.
- Donald also announced a Citizens for Accessibility for a Fair ADA Ride / transportation-related meeting on June 5th, 9:45–11:45 AM at the Entrepreneurs Sandbox Purple Box Meeting Room (secured by Patrick), available hybrid via Zoom and in person, covering paratransit, Handi-Van, Skyline, and the bus.

Meeting Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Annette Tashiro

Second: Nani Watanabe

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 11:01 AM.