Statewide Independent Living Council of Hawai‘i (SILC)

September Annual Meeting Minutes [DRAFT]

Date: Thursday, September 17, 2026

Time: 10:01 AM – approximately 12:45 PM

Location: Hybrid — in person and via Zoom videoconference

Accommodations: American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation provided (interpreters: Park and Linda)

1. Call to Order — Patrick Gartside (Chair)

Meeting called to order at 10:01 AM.

2. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum — Donald Sakamoto (Secretary)

Donald Sakamoto conducted roll call. Attendees introduced themselves with a brief visual description. Quorum was established.

Council Members Present:

- Patrick Gartside (Chair)
- Philip Ana (Vice Chair)
- Donald Sakamoto (Secretary)
- Annette Tashiro (Treasurer)
- Judy Guajardo (Executive Committee Member at Large)
- Lehua Chang
- Roy Corpus
- Kat Garel
- Brian Hauser
- Valerie Janikowski, Lānaʻi Kinaʻole
- Nani Watanabe
- Leticia (Letty) Zuno, Executive Director, Access to Independence

Council Members Absent / Excused:

- Lea Dias (ex officio, Designated State Entity (DSE))
- Vickie Kennedy (excused)

Staff:

- Amanda Lowe, Executive Director

Guests:

- Roxanne Untalan Bolden, Executive Director, Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH)
- Benjamin Foster, Interim Operations Manager, Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC)
- Dr. Meagan Miller, Executive Director, Center on Disability Studies (CDS), University of Hawaii at Mānoa
- Zosimo Arista, Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council)
- Noe de la Vega, Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii (LDAH)
- Catherine Edgar and Carolyn Kohler, Supporting Strategies (accounting)
- Tammy Evrard, Empowerment Director
- John Nishida, United Cerebral Palsy
- Alexa Fuller, Easterseals
- Melissa Gibo, Vice President of Programs, Lanakila Pacific
- Emma, Hawaii Pacific University student
- Kaili Kameoka
- Inga Park

3. Review of 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; have the right to live in a community of their choice with access to all necessary supports and home and community-based services; and are the best experts on their own lives and deserving of equal opportunity to decide how to live, work, and take part in their communities.

4. Public Reaffirmation by the SILC of the Goals of the Independent Living Network — Patrick Gartside

Patrick welcomed attendees to the September annual meeting and noted that on October 1 the SILC begins the final year of the current State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). He emphasized that the next SPIL must be data-driven, community-informed, and measurable, beginning with the community needs assessment (survey), focus groups to capture lived experience, and data from the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and partner agencies.

He described the aspirational goal discussed at the last SPIL meeting, a fully funded network in which every person with a disability receives an immediate, warm connection to services, peer mentors, seamless youth transition, and the resources to live safely at home rather than in an institution.

Patrick acknowledged current headwinds: a narrowed federal reading of Olmstead, Department of Education restructuring affecting vocational rehabilitation, rollbacks in federal fair housing protections, and an unsettled fiscal year (FY) 2027 independent living budget. He asked council members to attend meetings to maintain quorum, participate in committee work (with agendas and minutes), read packets in advance, disclose conflicts early, and speak for the Council only when authorized, consistent with the policies adopted in March. He acknowledged that SILC records have not been kept as well as required under the bylaws and stated that this is being corrected. He thanked Amanda Lowe and committee members for their work.

5. Approval of Agenda

Motion: To approve the agenda as presented.

Moved: Philip Ana Seconded: Donald Sakamoto

Result: Motion carried; no opposition.

6. Approval of Minutes — August 6, 2026 Meeting

Motion: To approve the minutes of the August 6, 2026 meeting as presented.

Moved: Donald Sakamoto Seconded: Judy Guajardo

Result: Motion carried unanimously. Minutes will be posted as final on the SILC website.

7. SILC Financial Report — Quarterly Review (Supporting Strategies)

Catherine Edgar and Carolyn Kohler of Supporting Strategies presented the third-quarter financial reporting package included in the meeting packet:

- Revenue of approximately $25,000 for the quarter.
- Expenses of approximately $30,000 for the quarter, composed of salaries and benefits, outsourced services, travel, and facility/property costs.
- Cash balance of approximately $205,000 at quarter end, roughly $4,000 lower than the prior quarter.
- Statement of financial position reflects cash, deposits held, and a minimal credit card balance.

No questions were raised.

8. Centers for Independent Living (CIL) Reports

A. Access to Independence — Leticia Zuno

Letty presented the Quarter 3 FY 2025–26 report (cumulative data from October 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026):

- 91 new consumers signed up in the quarter; 109 total consumers served; 17 became inactive (goals completed, withdrew, or moved); 92 developed Independent Living Plans (others waived and receive services through written goals).
- Age: 4 under 14; 36 youth ages 14–24; 47 ages 25–59; 21 age 60 or older. Gender: 61 female, 48 male.
- Race/ethnicity: 67 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; 23 White; 11 Asian; 3 Alaska Native; 1 Hispanic/Latino; 4 two or more races.
- Disability: 13 cognitive; 22 mental health/psychiatric; 33 physical; 14 hearing; 26 vision; 11 multiple. Targeted groups: 10 traumatic brain injury, 2 learning disabilities, 1 developmental disability.
- Services included 457 information and referral; 90 independent living skills training; 86 peer counseling; 68 home modification; 62 counseling; 60 youth services; 59 transportation assistance; 57 advocacy/legal; 51 assistive technology; 31 personal attendant services assistance; 27 vocational services; 19 communication; 10 family services; and 10 mobility training.
- Six people were relocated from skilled nursing facilities back to their homes, at an average cost of about $12,000 each compared with about $130,000 per year in nursing facility care. Thirty-six people remain on the waitlist for transition services.
- Access to Independence was awarded a Ford Foundation grant to support people with disabilities affected by recent storms, including emergency housing support, mental health services, assistive technology, and cleanup assistance.

Discussion:

Donald Sakamoto asked about consumer experiences with paratransit (Handi-Van). Letty reported frequent complaints about late pickups, failed pickups, and pickups not at the front door. Donald also asked about voting assistance; Letty described the Access to the Ballot program, which helps consumers register, update registrations, and learn about accessible voting, filing complaints, and signature matching, without influencing their choices. Donald noted he chairs the Honolulu Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee.

Patrick and Amanda commended the six institutional transitions. In response to Amanda's question about consumers under age 14, Letty explained that referrals typically come from families and hospitals; two of the four are newborns and two are under age three.

B. Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) — Roxanne Untalan Bolden

Roxanne noted that AILH's written report (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Part B and Part C data and systems advocacy report) was provided in advance, and used her oral report to share consumer stories:

- Maui: A 52-year-old blind man who had left the workforce due to progressive vision loss secured a part-time warehouse position with accommodations after AILH employment support, interview coaching, and employer advocacy.
- Hawaii Island: A 67-year-old man from the Federated States of Micronesia with lung and kidney cancer obtained a Hawaii state identification card with AILH assistance, enabling access to needed cancer medication.
- Kauai: A 77-year-old woman with multiple sclerosis and dementia obtained Med-QUEST (Hawaii Medicaid) long-term coverage and successfully appealed a Medicare denial for physical and occupational therapy, supporting an eventual safe return home.

Additional advocacy since the reporting period:

- Emergency response: Reviewed the Governor's storm proclamations (neither suspended Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504, or Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 489 protections); filed comments on the Interagency Council on Homelessness after-action review; working with the Department of Human Services (DHS) on shelter admission.
- 911 accessibility: Confirmed with AT&T that text-to-911 works with braille devices; raised the question of older equipment with the State 911 Board, which will add it to its agenda and survey counties on call-taker training.
- Public housing: Met with Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) staff on September 11; HPHA agreed to exempt elderly and disabled families from minimum rent, limit the work requirement to adults 18+, and clarify exemptions for multiple disabled adults in one household. Written testimony due by September 28.
- Honolulu Bill 18 (affordable rental housing): The committee draft removed the elevator requirement; the bill is postponed and AILH is preparing a coalition letter on elevators and parking.
- Digital accessibility (Act 257): Participating in Civil Rights Commission rulemaking.
- Workforce (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 188): Asked the Oahu Workforce Development Board to build accessibility into requirements for new providers.
- Transportation: Wrote to the Honolulu Department of Transportation Services (DTS) and the Mayor on pedestrian protections following passage of the e-bike/sidewalk bill; commented to the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on disability-inclusive public engagement.
- Aging: Submitted input on Maui County's and Kauai County's four-year aging services plans.
- Telehealth: Testified September 14 in support of telehealth as a 2027 legislative priority, with accessibility, audio-only, and payment-parity conditions; adopted unanimously.

- Federal monitoring: Tracking a long-term care bill from Hawaii's delegation and urging pairing with home and community-based services.
- Capstone: Creighton University Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) student Jada completed a 14-week capstone producing three accessible videos (exercising at home, emergency preparedness, transportation) to air on ʻŌlelo and AILH's YouTube channel.
- County measures: Filed on Hawaii County's community paramedicine program and two land use/zoning bills.

Discussion:

Donald Sakamoto noted he had been interviewed by Jada, is a voting member of the Oahu MPO, and testified at City Council to restore elevators in Bill 18. Tammy Evrard commended both CILs for reports that show the step-by-step work behind consumer outcomes, including nursing facility transitions. Patrick thanked both centers for data and advocacy reports that together give a fuller picture of work in the community.

Recess: The meeting recessed at approximately 10:55 AM and reconvened at 11:05 AM.

9. Quarterly Updates from Community Partners

Amanda noted that DVR was unable to attend due to a leadership meeting.

A. Center on Disability Studies (CDS), University of Hawaii at Mānoa — Dr. Meagan Miller

Dr. Miller shared University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) annual report data for July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026, organized by four goals:

- Workforce capacity: 639 professionals and paraprofessionals trained; 144 undergraduates enrolled in disability studies courses (a 47% increase).
- Community capacity: More than 12,500 community members reached through training events; 100% satisfaction among events that collected data.
- Inclusive research: $8.2 million in grant funding (70% federal, 17% state, 13% foundation/university) across 37 active projects, despite reduced federal opportunities.
- Accessible dissemination: More than 400,000 content requests from the Review of Disability Studies journal across 120+ countries; planning the next Pac Rim conference at a more accessible venue; developing a plain language team.

She noted CDS's continued tri-agency DD Network partnership with the DD Council and HDRC.

Discussion:

In response to Patrick, Dr. Miller described workforce efforts including a pending Registered Behavior Technician training grant for early intervention (birth to three), educator training in inclusive practices, a three-day Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) autism evaluation training planned for December, and work with Hawaii Pacific Health pediatrics to address the 2–3 year autism evaluation waitlist. Patrick encouraged CDS to consider reviving the Employment First task force; Dr. Miller will follow up with Jared.

Brian Hauser asked about benefits counseling training; Dr. Miller confirmed the program continues in partnership with DVR and is expected to ramp up. John Nishida asked (via chat) about incentives to retain trained personnel in Hawaii; Dr. Miller described a focus on training local residents, particularly on neighbor islands, and on building capacity among general pediatricians. Tammy Evrard asked whether people with disabilities serve on the plain language team; Dr. Miller confirmed one member does, and members of the CDS Community Advisory Committee have expressed interest in joining.

B. Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC) — Benjamin Foster

- Outreach included an open house with new neighbors at Bishop Square, hosting visiting students from American Samoa, participation in a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) event, discussions with the Alzheimer's Association on potential legislation, and an adapted physical education conference with the University of Hawaii.
- HDRC's community survey is open online (hawaiidisabilityrights.org), via Facebook, by phone, and by mail (2,750 paper surveys sent) to inform next year's priorities.
- Leadership attended the National Disability Rights Network conference in Portland, Oregon; HDRC also completed a peer review of internal systems.
- HDRC marks its 50th anniversary on July 1; a possible event is being considered.
- HDRC's fiscal year closes September 30; funding comes from 10 federal programs.
- HDRC and SILC submitted a joint two-year grant proposal to the Borealis Philanthropy Disability Inclusion Fund in May; a decision is expected in November.

Discussion:

Brian Hauser asked why the Client Assistance Program (CAP) brochure addresses DVR issues but not issues with CILs. Benjamin said the end of the fiscal year is a good time to revise materials and asked Brian to email him (bfoster@hawaiidisabilityrights.org). Donald Sakamoto asked about survey accessibility for screen reader users and language access; Benjamin confirmed SurveyMonkey, phone, and paper options, and said language accommodations are available on request. Donald also raised elevator outages and Bill 18; Benjamin shared personal (not agency) ideas such as requiring parts on hand and training local repair technicians, and Donald noted the need for backup power. Benjamin invited follow-up by email.

C. Citizens for a Fair ADA Ride (CFADAR) — Donald Sakamoto

- (CFADAR) held its quarterly meeting August 20 in Kakaʻako (hybrid), with DTS, Skyline, and Oahu Transit Services presenting; SILC assisted with Zoom and room setup.
- Concerns with Handi-Van vehicles: 58 rear-lift 2400-series vans purchased in 2024 drop riders in the roadway without curb cuts and have steep, unsafe side stairs; 18 2500-series vans purchased in 2025 have a side lift, and a handrail was added after (CFADAR) raised it. Larger cutaway vans are delayed by procurement issues.
- With HDRC, met with the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART) around August 14, with Congressman Ed Case, Council Member Nestor Garcia, a state representative, and a blind Dillingham resident, regarding construction impacts on sidewalks and crosswalks; concerns remain for future segments.
- Next (CFADAR) meeting: tentatively November 19, 9:45–11:45 AM.

Patrick thanked Donald, noted a storm-damaged bus stop at McCully and Piʻikoi, and suggested AILH connect with (CFADAR). Donald noted his earlier suggestion of audible signage to notify blind riders of closed bus stops.

D. Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii (LDAH) — Noe de la Vega

- LDAH continues serving families in Hawaii and the Pacific Islands and has developed an app to provide access to services and training where internet is limited.
- LDAH has applied for grants to translate special education materials into ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi and to expand artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools to help families navigate special education.
- Special education may move from the Department of Education to the Department of Health and Human Services; no change has occurred yet.

Patrick offered to forward a community foundation grant opportunity. Donald asked about Starlink for rural access and braille in students' languages; Noe said the pending grant may support connectivity and that LDAH helps schools and families access braille accommodations despite limited resources.

E. Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities — Zosimo Arista

- Statewide legislative forums are underway (Maui and Kona complete; Hilo, Kauai, and Oahu upcoming) to identify 2027 legislative priorities.
- Working on emergency management and access and functional needs, and the Bridging Aging and Disability hui.
- The Council's new five-year State Plan begins October 1, 2026 and runs through 2031.
- Federal funding remains flat while costs rise; the Council will ask the legislature about converting some federally funded positions to state-funded positions.

- Possible 2027 priorities: guardianship/conservatorship protection and advocacy (P&A) support function; a statewide FASD coordinator; Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts for foster youth with disabilities; and an Institute on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities with CDS.

Donald asked about shelters on Kauai during recent storms; Zosimo said a program specialist tracked affected individuals and the Council provided feedback, with a small number of families having issues reaching or being supported at shelters. Donald also asked about outreach to homeless individuals with developmental disabilities; Zosimo said this has not been a focus but could be addressed.

F. State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) — Patrick Gartside

Patrick reported on behalf of the SRC, as Chair Evan Nakatsuka could not attend:

- The SRC recommended that DVR work with SILC on shared training for vocational rehabilitation (VR) staff on lived experience.
- With SILC's help, the SRC is moving to a centralized data system similar to SILC's.
- The SRC has five open seats and seeks applicants, particularly former VR clients, by year end.
- A new quarterly report format will combine data, verbal updates, and the federal performance dashboard with plain language explanations.
- The FY 2027 SRC budget of approximately $60,000 was approved; quarterly budget checks will begin, and a working group is exploring member compensation.
- Evan Nakatsuka was re-elected Chair and Patrick continues as Vice Chair; Secretary and Treasurer positions are open.

Donald asked when the SRC meets; Patrick said quarterly and will share the next date.

Recess: The meeting recessed at approximately 12:05 PM and reconvened at 12:15 PM.

10. SILC Quarterly Reports — Annual SILC Activities Report — Amanda Lowe

Amanda highlighted activities from the past fiscal year aligned with SPIL goals:

Goal 1 — Enhance the impact of the Independent Living Network: Adopted the Policies and Procedures Manual (March 2026); welcomed Roy Corpus, Lehua Chang, and Leticia Zuno, and seated Lea Dias as ex officio for the DSE; operated seven active committees; promoted the network at DD legislative forums, the Lāna‘i Health Fair, the White Cane Walk, and the Capitol resource fair, distributing plain language SILC and SPIL summaries; received quarterly reports from both CILs.

Goal 2 — Inform and guide response to emerging disability issues: Developed the community needs assessment; collected mini-survey data at forums, fairs, and events; began a network-wide SPIL evaluation with the CILs; hosted robust partner reports at quarterly meetings.

Goal 3 — Enhance systems change for inclusive and accessible communities: Supported C-FAIR meetings; worked to reconstitute the Honolulu Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities; submitted the joint Borealis grant proposal with HDRC.

Goal 4 — Equal access to community resources during disasters: Invited the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Vibrant Hawaii to present at quarterly meetings; attended Vibrant Hawaii training in Hilo; participated with the Kahaluʻu Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and the Koʻolau Resilience Hub Symposium.

Amanda noted that guest attendance at quarterly meetings has increased over the past year, and thanked members for submitting activity reports.

11. SILC Votes

11.a — Amendment to Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 4, Item 4

Current text: "I will fulfill my responsibilities without interfering in day-to-day operation of Centers for Independent Living or SILC staff while collaborating with fellow council members to provide appropriate oversight and guidance."

Proposed text: "I will fulfill my responsibilities without interfering in day-to-day operation of Centers for Independent Living or SILC staff while collaborating with fellow council members to provide appropriate oversight and guidance on the State Plan for Independent Living."

Motion: To approve the amended language.

Moved: Philip Ana Seconded: Donald Sakamoto

Result: Motion carried.

11.b — Adoption of Eligible Funds and Investment Policies and Procedures

New policies to be contained in Section 1 of the Policies and Procedures Manual, establishing which Council funds are eligible for investment, minimum liquidity requirements, permitted and prohibited investments, insurance and custody requirements, authorization of accounts and transfers, and oversight and reporting requirements (text included in meeting packet).

Motion: To adopt the eligible funds and investment policies and procedures.

Moved: Annette Tashiro Seconded: Nani Watanabe

Result: Motion carried; no opposition.

11.c — Adoption of the Community Needs Assessment

The survey instrument will be used by the Hawaii Independent Living Network to collect information from people with disabilities, families, and service providers statewide on unmet needs, service gaps, and independent living priorities, to inform development of the next SPIL. Patrick thanked the Survey/Data Committee and noted the survey will next be converted into an accessible instrument for community distribution.

Motion: To approve the community needs assessment survey (latest draft in meeting packet).

Moved: Philip Ana Seconded: Annette Tashiro

Result: Motion carried; no opposition.

11.d — Executive Committee Slate for FY 2027

Proposed slate: Patrick Gartside, Chair; Philip Ana, Vice Chair; Donald Sakamoto, Secretary; Annette Tashiro, Treasurer; Judy Guajardo, Executive Committee Member at Large.

The Chair called three times for additional nominations for Chair and for Vice Chair, and for any other position. No further nominations were made.

Motion: To approve the slate as presented, by acclamation.

Moved: Donald Sakamoto Seconded: Judy Guajardo

Result: Motion carried; slate elected.

12. FY 2027 SILC Committee Overview and Member Sign-Up

Patrick reviewed each committee. Committees are open to non-members and the public, though council members are needed on each. The Chair appointed a chair for each committee, as noted below. Charters (including meeting frequency) are posted on the SILC website and will be emailed to all members. Committees will set their own meeting schedules. Valerie Janikowski asked for time commitment information before signing up; Annette noted committees typically meet about four times a year for about an hour. Amanda noted that committee meetings are recorded and that agendas and minutes backlogs are being posted to the website.

- Executive Committee: Governing body between Council meetings; oversees the Executive Director and coordinates standing committees; meets at least monthly; meetings are open to the public. Chair: Patrick Gartside. Members elected under item 11.d.
- Finance Committee: Provides financial oversight; meets at least quarterly. Chair: Annette Tashiro. Comprised of the Treasurer, Chair, and Vice Chair; Annette invited new members to join.
- Advocacy Committee: Monitors public policy at local, state, and federal levels; meets at least quarterly and more often during session. Chair: Philip Ana. Vice Chair: Donald Sakamoto.
- Transportation Committee: Addresses accessible transportation barriers statewide, especially on neighbor islands; Donald plans to revive mobility management legislation. Chair: Donald Sakamoto. Members: Patrick Gartside (volunteered to assist), Nani Watanabe. Nani noted limited weekend transportation on Maui and Lānaʻi.
- SPIL Committee: Develops, implements, monitors, and evaluates the SPIL with the CILs and DSE. Chair: Patrick Gartside. Members: Patrick Gartside, Letty Zuno, Roxanne Untalan Bolden, Philip Ana, with support from Amanda Lowe; Brian Hauser joined.
- Emergency Preparedness and Response Committee (new): Ensures people with disabilities are included in all phases of emergency management; meets at least quarterly and more often during disasters. Chair: Annette Tashiro. Vice Chair: Donald Sakamoto. Members: Roy Corpus, Letty Zuno.
- Engagement Committee: Recruits, vets, and orients new members. Philip reported all members have been approved through the Governor's office; the Council is at 14 members. Chair: Philip Ana. Nani Watanabe will coordinate with Philip on nominations.
- Survey / Data Committee: Designs and analyzes surveys and data to guide SPIL development. Chair: Judy Guajardo. Active members include Letty Zuno and Valerie Janikowski.
- Policies and Procedures Committee: Develops and maintains SILC policies and procedures. Chair: Philip Ana.

The Nominations Committee was not reviewed due to time. Committee recruitment will continue by email, and a schedule of committee meetings will be published. Remaining agenda items were deferred to the next meeting.

13. Public Comment and Announcements

- Donald Sakamoto announced the Young at Heart Expo (September 25–26, Blaisdell) and the White Cane Walk in October. Patrick thanked Access to Independence for sponsoring a shared table with AILH and SILC at the Expo.

- Annette Tashiro raised concerns about whether the current meeting day and time (first Thursday, 9:00 AM) work for members. The Council will survey members on preferred meeting times, including evening options, which may also increase community participation.
- Patrick thanked everyone, noting the new fiscal year begins in about a week and a half and marks the start of developing the next SPIL.

14. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by A. Tashiro and seconded by Nani Watanabe; all council members in favor. The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:45 PM.