

Statewide Independent Living Council of Hawai'i

Monthly Meeting Minutes [APPROVED]

Date: April 2, 2026

Time: 9:03 AM – 10:55 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 9:03 AM.

Roll Call / Attendance – Donald Sakamoto

SILC Members Present:

- Philip Ana, SILC Member (Vice Chair)
- Jodi Asato, SILC Member
- Catia Garell, SILC Member
- Patrick Gartside, SILC Member (Chair)
- Judy Guajardo, SILC Member, joined later (Executive Committee Member at Large)
- Brian Hauser, SILC Member
- Valerie Janikowski, SILC Member
- Vickie Kennedy, SILC Member
- Donald Sakamoto, SILC Member (Secretary)
- Annette Tashiro, SILC Member (Treasurer)
- Nani Watanabe, SILC Member

SILC Members Absent:

- Letty Zuno, SILC Member

Staff:

- Amanda Lowe, Executive Director

Incoming SILC Member:

- Lehua Chang, Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (Maui/Lana'i) – incoming July 2026

Guests:

- Dr. Meghan Miller, Director, Center on Disability Studies (CDS), University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (Presenter)
- Cheryl Matthews, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- John Nishida, Executive Director, United Cerebral Palsy Association (UCP) of Hawaii
- Kaili Kameoka
- Leelynn Brady

Quorum established.

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

Patrick confirmed council members had an opportunity to review the agenda attached to the state calendar and email.

Motion: Philip Ana motioned to approve the agenda.

Second: Annette Tashiro

Result: Unanimous approval

Approval of Minutes – February 5, 2026

Motion: Annette Tashiro motioned to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2026, meeting.

Second: Vickie Kennedy

Result: Unanimous approval

SILC Reports

SILC Activities Report – Amanda Lowe

Amanda thanked members for submitting their activity reports and reminded the council that reports do not need to be long or comprehensive. She organized the report according to the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) goals.

Goal 1: Enhance the Impact of Independent Living

- SILC members attended the Day at the Capitol sponsored by the Developmental Disabilities Network on March 4th.
- Attended the SILC Quarterly Meeting on Maui on March 5th, including time with Brian Hauser and Nani Watanabe.
- A SILC member chaired the Hawai'i Association of the Blind (HAB) 59th Convention on March 7th, coordinating meals, hotel reservations, and 13 vendors.

Goal 2: Inform and Guide Response to Emerging Disability Issues

- Attended the Children with Special Needs Health Benefits Branch Town Hall meetings on March 2nd and 27th, providing input from lived experience.
- Participated in the Special Parent Information Network (SPIN) Conference on March 28th.
- A SILC member facilitates Guide Dogs 808, educating members on guide dog health and handler safety.

Goal 3: Enhance Systems Change for Inclusive Communities

- Attended Congresswoman Tokuda's town hall on March 10th, where a parent raised concerns about Medicaid waiver impacts on independent living.
- Participated in webinars on dementia behaviors, immigrant disability rights, food insecurity for solo agers, and state disability employment initiatives.
- Attended the O'ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Citizen Advisory Committee meeting on March 4th and testified at the Honolulu City Council on March 25th in support of installing bus shelters at stops with service frequencies exceeding 30 minutes.
- A SILC member continues serving on boards for Hawai'i Fido Service Dogs and Guide Dog Users Incorporated.

Goal 4: Equal Access to Community Resources During Disasters

- Participated in the Kāneʻohe–Kāhaluu Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) communications exercise.
- Attended Vibrant Hawaiʻi's Community Emergency Action Plan training.
- Attended the CERT Kūpuna coalition meeting on March 20th.

Discussion:

Donald Sakamoto clarified that in his testimony before the Honolulu City Council regarding bus shelters, he emphasized that the Department of Transportation must ensure accessible sidewalks to lead to the shelters, noting past instances where shelters were installed without accessible access routes.

Guest Presentation

Note: At Brian Hauser's request and with Dr. Miller's agreement, the guest presentation was moved up in the agenda.

Learning From Others: Center on Disability Studies (CDS) – Dr. Meghan Miller

Dr. Meghan Miller, the new Director of the Center on Disability Studies (CDS) at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, joined for her first presentation to SILC. She introduced herself and shared her background, priorities, and goals for CDS.

Background:

- Clinical psychologist with over 15 years of research and clinical work in early detection of autism, including early markers and screening in infants and toddlers at higher risk.
- Dr. Miller came to CDS from the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) Medical Investigation of Neurodevelopmental Disorders (MIND) Institute, where she was faculty involved in psychology training programs.
- She started at CDS in January 2026 (approximately 90 days in the role at the time of presentation).

About CDS:

- Home to the Hawaiʻi University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), federally funded under the Developmental Disabilities Act.
- Also collaborates on the Pacific Basin UCEDD, serving American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands.

- Over 120 faculty and staff with many projects; the website is being revamped to better disseminate community resources.
- Four UCEDD core functions: community collaboration, interdisciplinary training, dissemination of information and resources, and research.
- Part of a tri-agency partnership with the Hawai'i Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council and the Hawai'i Disability Rights Center (HDRC).
- Hosts the annual Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity (PacRim) and offers a certificate program in disability studies.

Priority Areas Going Forward:

- Workforce development in psychology to address the reported 3-year waitlist for autism evaluations in Hawai'i.
- Interdisciplinary work and collaboration across units, the School of Medicine, Speech and Communication Sciences and Disorders, and Pediatrics at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM).
- Mental health needs of individuals with disabilities as they age, and aging with developmental disabilities more broadly.
- Inclusive higher education, including transition to employment and independent living for program participants.
- Early detection, screening, and family navigation services for newly diagnosed children with autism.

Discussion:

- Donald Sakamoto asked about transportation challenges for people with developmental disabilities and invited collaboration on transportation education.
- John Nishida (UCP) expressed interest in coordinating a lunch-and-learn for his 45+ social workers and therapists, given UCP's early intervention work with 600+ children.
- Catia Garell, occupational therapist, raised the severe shortage of developmental pediatricians in Hawai'i (Dr. Okamoto has a 1+ year waitlist), forcing many families to travel to the mainland for diagnosis. Dr. Miller shared that CDS's long-term dream is to develop an autism center of excellence and noted new telehealth tools for young children.
- Brian Hauser, a graduate of the CDS Interdisciplinary Certificate on Disability and Diversity, encouraged collaboration on grants, particularly in employment.

- Patrick Gartside asked how CDS can strengthen collaboration with DVR, the Department of Education (DOE), the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), and the Hawai'i Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes (Hawai'i currently ranks 48 out of 50). Dr. Miller spoke to evidence-based models like Project SEARCH and the need for systems-level buy-in and industry partnerships.
- Cheryl Matthews (DVR) noted Hawai'i is an employment-first state and emphasized the need for sustainable, coordinated systems so that multiple agencies are not approaching the same pot of employers separately. She invited Dr. Miller to review the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan currently under amendment.
- Patrick informed Dr. Miller that the DOE has an open Request for Proposals (RFP) for intermediary services for work-based learning and workforce development (approximately three weeks remaining) that may align with CDS's work. He will send the link.

Dr. Miller shared her email in the chat for ongoing collaboration, miller95@hawaii.edu.

Break

Approximately 10-minute break taken.

Committee Reports

Survey Committee Report – Amanda Lowe

The Survey Committee met on April 1, 2026. Attendees included Amanda, Jodi, Nani, Roxanne, Letty, and Philip.

- The committee provided initial review of a “mini-survey” intended for use at tabling events and in the community, designed to take no more than two minutes to complete.
- Letty framed the larger community needs survey as exploratory, with data that will directly inform the next SPIL.
- Amanda will incorporate feedback and present an initial draft of the larger community needs survey at the committee's next meeting on May 1, 2026.
- Valerie Janikowski identified a survey expert on Lana'i who may be able to review the surveys before release.
- The council has approximately six months once the surveys are published to gather data to inform the next SPIL.

State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) Committee Report – Amanda Lowe

No formal report this month. Invitations will be sent for a meeting next Wednesday. At the last meeting, possible substantive amendments were discussed. Substantive amendments require Administration for Community Living (ACL) sign-off and public forums.

Advocacy Committee Report – Philip Ana

- The Audio Pedestrian Signal (APS) bill on pedestrian crossings is moving forward; many members have submitted testimony.
- Philip shared that the American Council of the Blind’s “Speak Up” platform provides an accessible way for blind constituents to submit testimony to senators on employment, Medicaid, and education. Philip recently received three response letters from Senator Brian Schatz through this channel.
- Philip encouraged members to take advantage of remote advocacy opportunities and acknowledged Howard Lester and HAB for distributing advocacy calls to action.

Legislative Update – Donald Sakamoto:

- House Bill (HB) 1894 HD1 SD1 (Braille Industry Bill): Advocating that Senator Dela Cruz, Ways and Means Chair, schedule a hearing. The bill supports Braille materials for K–12 students.
- Senate Bill (SB) 2558 SD1 (Website Accessibility): Advocating for a hearing to advance website and technology accessibility. Donald is working with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Hawai’i on both bills.

Treasurer’s Report – Annette Tashiro

- Current balance (as of April 1, 2026): \$200,912
- Available balance: \$200,263

As a reminder, full Treasurer’s reports are presented at quarterly meetings; balance information is provided at monthly meetings.

Independent Living Services in the Community

SILC Outreach Plans and Efforts

Patrick framed discussion around how SILC is fulfilling SPIL Goal 1 to enhance the impact of the Independent Living Network by strengthening and expanding SILC and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs).

Outreach Approaches Discussed:

- Donald Sakamoto recommended SILC reach out to Honolulu's neighborhood boards to provide briefings on SILC's work.
- Amanda noted the CILs and SILC recently co-presented at a DVR-hosted transition conference and suggested developing a standardized joint presentation for future use.
- Amanda proposed that SILC include CIL brochures alongside SILC materials at all tabling events (to be discussed with the CILs).
- Philip reported ongoing regular meetings between the SILC Executive Director and the CILs, noting the policies and procedures now include a code of ethics for SILC–CIL collaboration.
- SILC is holding meetings on neighbor islands to expand outreach beyond O'ahu. Maui has already been visited; Hawai'i Island and Kaua'i are next.

Public Comment – Leelynn Brady:

Leelynn asked how SILC supports dissemination for the entire Independent Living Network (not just SILC). Patrick and Amanda described upcoming social media efforts, cross-promotion, and the inclusion of CIL materials at tabling events. Leelynn confirmed CIL executive directors are federally mandated signers of the SPIL.

Reuse Program Update – Jodi Asato:

Jodi reported that following recent flooding, Daintry (DD Council) and Derek Ariyoshi (City and County Elderly Affairs) have been coordinating assistance. Jason attended a service provider gathering at Wailua District Park on Monday. Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC) in Atlanta provided approximately \$3,000 in Amazon credits to supply wheelchairs, iPads, and other AT equipment for Hawai'i residents affected by the flooding.

Upcoming Events to Track (per Annette Tashiro):

- No Wrong Door meeting: April 14, 2026 (convened by Catherine Corinaga, Department of Human Services).
- Honolulu Committee on Aging: April 22, 2026.
- Hawai'i DD Council meeting: April 27, 2026, 1:00 PM.
- PacRim Conference on Disability (upcoming – SILC did not sign up as exhibitor this year).

Accessible Materials:

Patrick confirmed SILC is up to date with Braille and accessible versions of the SILC one-pager and State Rehabilitation Council one-pager, with thanks to the Library for the Blind. SILC will acquire its own Braille soon and plans to offer Braille production support to the CILs for independent living materials.

Old Business

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

Patrick will hand-deliver a revised letter to Managing Director Mike Formby today, following up with an email. The letter advocates for reconstitution of the Mayor's Committee to provide input on accessibility issues proactively rather than after the fact.

Discussion:

- Leelynn Brady informed SILC that Councilmember Radiant Cordero submitted a resolution in January 2026 urging reconstitution of the Commission on Persons with Disabilities, referencing the Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) and the Hawai'i Disability Rights Center (HDRC). The resolution is currently stuck in the International Committee. Patrick will follow up with Councilmember Cordero's office.
- Donald Sakamoto reported that at the last #30 Kaneohe Neighborhood Board meeting, Andy Kawano (Director of Budget and Fiscal Services/Mayoral Representative for Kaneohe Neighborhood Board) relayed that the Managing Director and Chief of Staff preferred HDRC and DCAB take the lead. Donald countered that those are state agencies and a local committee of people with diverse disabilities is still needed, noting neighbor island counties already have mayor's committees.
- The most recent response from the Mayor's Office indicated no interest in reconstituting the committee, but SILC continues to advocate.

New Business

National Conference Participation

At the last meeting, the council approved sending up to four members to each of two upcoming conferences.

- National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Conference: July 20–23, 2026, Washington, D.C. Registration is open; early-bird registration encouraged before the next meeting. Donald Sakamoto attended in 2025 and opted out this year; Patrick Gartside expressed interest in attending.
- Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) Conference: October 23 – 25, 2026, Niagara Falls, New York. Donald Sakamoto and Nani Watanabe expressed interest.

Members interested in attending should email info@HawaiiSILC.org or Amanda Lowe.

Council Member List and Contact Information

Annette Tashiro raised the need for a centralized council member contact list. Amanda will send an email requesting each member's preferred email and phone number (where members are comfortable sharing) and will compile a distribution list. New-member contact information will be incorporated during the July 2026 new council member training.

SILC Email Addresses and Business Cards

Pursuant to the adopted Policies and Procedures Manual, SILC will issue official SILC email addresses and printed/Brailled business cards to council members upon request. Amanda will send a follow-up email within the next week asking members to opt in.

Next Quarterly Meeting – June 2026

The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for June 4, 2026. Consensus favored holding the meeting on Hawai'i Island to continue neighbor island outreach.

- Donald Sakamoto expressed preference for Hawai'i Island.
- Discussion on whether to host in Hilo or Kona to follow; SILC will reach out to the CIL, the DD Council, and service providers for hosting support.
- Nani Watanabe will coordinate potential DD Council support and report back to Amanda.
- Patrick will be traveling in Japan during the June meeting and will not be present in person; technical support will be needed.

SILC Support for the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Technology Resources

Patrick proposed that SILC set up a dedicated SRC email address within SILC's infrastructure, along with a Google Drive for SRC resources to live perpetually (currently files are fragmented across personal accounts).

and change with each chair). Judy Guajardo noted that SILC's SRC liaison role is by default held by the SILC chair; designating another member requires full Senate confirmation for SRC membership.

Social Media Outreach Update

Kaili Kameoka has been helping plan a month's worth of content. SILC will collaborate with the CILs on cross-promotion.

Committee Charters

Patrick has drafted committee charters and sent them to the Executive Committee for initial review. The Executive Committee will meet once more (meeting open to the public), then charters will go to the full council. The goal is to adopt charters at the next council meeting and officially appoint committee chairs.

Current Committee Structure:

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

Philip Ana raised the need to incorporate Emergency Preparedness into the committee structure. Amanda and Philip will discuss alignment with SPIL goals before charters are finalized.

Charters will be posted in a document repository on the SILC website alongside the bylaws and policies and procedures. All committee meetings are open to the public and posted on the state calendar in accordance with the Office of Information Practices and Sunshine Law.

Additional Announcements

Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation (HART) / Dillingham Construction Update – Donald Sakamoto:

Donald attended a public meeting on March 2, 2026 (6:00–7:30 PM at 215 King Street) hosted by HART and Councilmember DeSanto Tam to discuss impacts of Dillingham sidewalk construction on residents and

businesses. A walkthrough is planned with Lisa, a blind resident of Kalihi who lives near Dillingham, to communicate accessibility concerns directly to contractors.

UCP Aging with Cerebral Palsy Study – John Nishida:

John announced a year-long study in partnership with the University of Hawai'i surveying individuals aging with cerebral palsy to conduct a needs assessment. Preliminary themes include financial insecurity, mental health needs, and socialization. The study ends at the end of summer 2026. John will circulate the survey to SILC for distribution and website posting.

Meeting Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Donald Sakamoto

Second: Annette Tashiro

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 10:55 AM.