

**Statewide Independent Living Council of Hawai'i (SILC)
August Monthly Meeting Minutes [Approved]**

Date: Thursday, August 6, 2026

Time: 9:02 a.m. – 10:53 a.m. Hawai'i Standard Time

Location: Hybrid — in person on O'ahu and via Zoom

Presiding: Patrick Gartside, Chair

Recording: This meeting was recorded.

1. Call to Order

Chair Patrick Gartside called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Hawai'i Standard Time, quorum having been established.

2. Roll Call / Attendance

Council Members Present: Patrick Gartside, Chair (attending from the continental United States, East Coast); Lehua Chang; Roy Corpuz (Hawai'i Island); Judy Guajardo; Brian Hauser; Vickie Kennedy; Donald Sakamoto, Secretary; Annette Tashiro; Nani Watanabe (joined in progress).

Council Members Excused: Philip Ana; Catia Garell; Valerie Janikowski; Leticia (Letty) Zuno.

Staff: Amanda Lowe, Executive Director.

Designated State Entity: Cheryl Matthews, Hawai'i Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) — Designated State Entity liaison, attending on behalf of Lea Dias.

Guests: Nancy Romaine, Kaua'i Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (first-time attendee); Alexa Fuller, Easterseals Hawai'i; Matthew Brown, Library for the Blind and Print Disabled; Kaili Kameoka; Atsuko Kuwana, Honolulu (first-time attendee); Ann da Silva.

Per Council practice, members and guests provided self-descriptions during introductions for accessibility.

3. Independent Living Philosophy Statement

Executive Director Amanda Lowe read the Council's Independent Living philosophy statement, read at the opening of each meeting: Independent Living is a movement, a program, and a philosophy, founded on the belief that people with disabilities should enjoy the same civil rights, choices, and autonomy as those without disabilities; that they have the right to live in the community of their choice with access to all necessary supports and home and community-based services; and that persons with disabilities are the best experts on their own lives and bodies, deserving of equal opportunity to decide how to live, work, and take part in their communities.

Chair Gartside noted that the movement predates the current membership, and that the Council is responsible for continuing the work and inspiring youth with disabilities to carry it forward.

4. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was distributed with the calendar invitation and posted to the State calendar.

Motion: Donald Sakamoto moved to approve the agenda. Second: Annette Tashiro. Result: Motion carried unanimously; no opposition.

5. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the July 2026 meeting were distributed with the meeting materials and posted to the State calendar.

Motion: Annette Tashiro moved to approve the July minutes. Second: Judy Guajardo. Result: Motion carried unanimously; no opposition. July minutes approved.

6. SILC Activities Report

Executive Director Amanda Lowe reported member activities by the four goals of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) and thanked members who submitted reports; late submissions will be captured next month.

Goal 1 — Enhance the impact of the Independent Living network: July Council meeting; a Council member and the Executive Director attended the Assistive Technology Resource Center (ATRC) Advisory Meeting; SILC Finance Committee meeting; members attended the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.; Executive Committee met to set this agenda and begin planning the September quarterly meeting.

Goal 2 — Inform and guide response to emerging disability issues: Interaction with the Assistive Technology Resource Center; interaction with the Hawai'i Disability Rights Center (HDRC); a member worked with the Hawai'i Association of the Blind (HAB) Membership Forum; members attended the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council) meeting.

Goal 3 — Enhance systems change supporting inclusive and accessible communities statewide: Members attended the O'ahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OMPO) Citizen Advisory Committee; business cards, including brailled cards, were produced for members attending the National Council on Independent Living conference, with remaining member cards to be distributed in September; a member attended the Kalihi-Pālana Neighborhood Board; a member attended and submitted testimony to the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority (HPHA) Board.

Goal 4 — Equal access to community resources before, during, and after disasters: A member attended the Vibrant Hawai'i Roundtable; members attended Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) emergency preparedness training; members attended the Kāne'ohe-Kahalu'u Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) monthly meeting; a member is preparing a presentation for the No Wrong Door meeting on August 11.

Chair Gartside reminded members that activity reports are requested about a week before each meeting and may be emailed at any time, and that sharing them helps members identify opportunities to collaborate.

7. Committee Reports

a. Survey Committee

Members: Nani Watanabe, Leticia Zuno, Roxanne Bolden, Valerie Janikowski, Philip Ana; staffed by Amanda Lowe.

The committee has met regularly on the Community Needs Assessment, the survey instrument that identifies community challenges, unmet needs, and functioning services, and that informs development of the State Plan for Independent Living. Editorial feedback was received from Nancy Partika, recommended to the Council by the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities. The committee will meet once more to review additional edits, with the goal of bringing the survey to the full Council for review and vote in September, after which it will be distributed to the community.

Chair Gartside noted the Council previously approved a short-form survey for tabling events; the Community Needs Assessment is longer and more detailed. He expressed hope the committee will recommend aligning it with American Community Survey data so findings can be tied to demographic data identifying where need exists in Hawai'i.

b. State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) Committee

Members: Patrick Gartside, Philip Ana, Leticia Zuno, Roxanne Bolden; staffed by Amanda Lowe.

The committee drafts the federally funded State Plan for Independent Living and monitors progress across its three-year cycle; the Council is approximately two years into the current plan. Recent meetings addressed potential minor amendments and began discussion of the successor plan. At the National Council on Independent Living conference, members met with other states about their plans and with Independent Living Training and Technical Assistance staff. The committee expects to meet again within a few weeks.

Amanda Lowe added that staff is compiling an evaluation of where the Independent Living network in Hawai'i stands against the current plan; both Centers for Independent Living have submitted updates, and the compiled evaluation is expected for discussion in September.

Member question (Donald Sakamoto): Requested an explanation of the State Plan for Independent Living for first-time attendees, including which organizations are funded and where they are located.

Chair's response: The plan brings approximately \$1.5 million to Hawai'i. The full plan (approximately 40 pages) is posted on the Council website, along with a plain-language one-page overview. Funding flows through Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act:

- Part C funding is granted directly to Centers for Independent Living by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and brings approximately \$1 million to the state. Access to Independence (Honolulu office) receives approximately \$500,000 and currently serves urban Honolulu, with efforts underway to expand across O'ahu. Aloha Independent Living Hawai'i (Hilo office) receives slightly less than \$500,000 and serves the neighbor islands — Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i counties — as well as rural O'ahu.
- Part B funding of \$348,000 comes to the state, directed by the State Plan for Independent Living, with a 10% state match of approximately \$34,800. Under the current plan these funds go to Aloha Independent Living Hawai'i for direct services in rural areas.

c. Finance Committee

The committee focuses on resource development — funding and Council operations. It is exploring an interest-bearing account, and Chair Gartside is researching additional funding options. Further information is expected at the annual meeting.

d. Treasurer's Report

Available balance: \$188,042.

8. New Business

a. Report Back — National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Annual Conference

Dates: July 20–23, 2026, Washington, D.C. Attendees: Patrick Gartside, Annette Tashiro, Nani Watanabe, Amanda Lowe. Detailed notes are available to any member on request.

Monday: Opened with archival footage of Senator Tom Harkin on the Senate floor during passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), welcoming remarks from Theo Braddy, Executive Director of the National Council on Independent Living, and a keynote by Dr. Victor Pineda, Executive Director of the Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, California — widely regarded as the foundation of the Independent Living movement. Attendees met with Hiyab, the Hawai'i liaison at the Administration for Community Living. Senator Harkin spoke at the awards luncheon without notes; Amanda Lowe's principal takeaway was his statement that, of the purposes listed in the Act, Independent Living is the key to all the others.

Tuesday: Workshops, a meeting with the Independent Living Training and Technical Assistance center, and an afternoon rally and march from the hotel to the United States Capitol. Hawai'i delegates marched with their region and with Leticia Zuno of Access to Independence and staff member Brent.

Wednesday: Workshops and congressional visits with Congressman Ed Case, Congresswoman Jill Tokuda, and the offices of Senator Brian Schatz and Senator Mazie Hirono, the last lasting over an hour with substantive questions and indications of forthcoming legislation.

Thursday: Morning workshops and a closing keynote by Mia Ives-Rublee, who leads disability work at the Center for American Progress. Her central point: the Americans with Disabilities Act is the basement, not the ceiling — federal law sets a foundation rather than the totality of what should be done.

Member question (Donald Sakamoto): Asked about the conference theme and rally shirts. Response: Shirts were black, marking the 36th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, with "36" and the theme "We're Not Going Back" in bright pink-violet. The Hawai'i delegation carried signs reading "Our Kuleana."

Chair Gartside reported on two breakout sessions:

1. Disability Funding Opportunities and Philanthropy Panel — with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Disability Inclusion Fund, and the Disability Philanthropy Forum. Though aimed largely at Centers for Independent Living, Statewide Independent Living Councils may apply for funding in partnership with Centers — a point echoed in the Training and Technical Assistance conversation. The current State Plan commits the network to resource development, and the Chair identified partnership applications as a concrete opportunity.

2. Youth Transition and Person-Centered Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) — transition and diversion is one of the five core services of Independent Living. The Chair noted students respond differently to a presenter who shares their disability experience than to a service provider, and identified expanded direct Pre-ETS services from Centers as both a programmatic priority and a fundable opportunity.

The Chair also met with Brooke Wilson of the National Association of Statewide Independent Living Councils (NASILC).

b. Advocacy Update — National Council on Independent Living Legislative Priorities

Amanda Lowe reported the priorities used for the congressional visits, noting that because the delegation traveled on SILC funds, the visits were educational in nature.

- Federal funding increase for the Independent Living network. The National Council on Independent Living has historically requested a \$500 million increase covering both Statewide Independent Living Councils and Centers for Independent Living; given the current appropriations climate, this year's request was \$250 million.
- Ending institutional bias in Medicaid. Discussed with the congressional delegation, which is supportive of Independent Living and home and community-based services.
- Full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Congress committed to funding 40% of the excess cost of educating students with disabilities when the law passed; that commitment has never been met and current funding is approximately 15–16%. The bill discussed would establish a path to the full 40%. Bill numbers are listed in the agenda.
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Savings Penalty Elimination Act. Would raise the asset limit from \$2,000 to \$10,000 for an individual and from \$3,000 to \$20,000 for a married couple.
- Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act. Would end subminimum wage for individuals with disabilities nationwide and provide transition support to states. Hawai'i ended the practice by state law in 2021 and is one of approximately 17 states to have done so.

Member comment (Annette Tashiro): Independent Living in Hawai'i is roughly 30 to 40 years old, and the federal Independent Living budget has not increased in 46 years. Costs have risen and organizations must pay competitive wages. While \$500 million was understood to be unattainable, \$250 million was presented to the congressional delegation.

Member comment (Donald Sakamoto): Raised concern about Social Security solvency, with a projected 2032 deadline and potential benefit cuts of 22% to 25% affecting people with disabilities and kūpuna, and

urged bipartisan resolution. Chair Gartside noted the delegation's attention to the issue and thanked Mr. Sakamoto for his advocacy.

c. Discussion — Reaching Unserved and Underserved Individuals

Member question (Vickie Kennedy): Census data indicates approximately 25,000 blind individuals in the State of Hawai'i. Neither the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) nor the Hawai'i Association of the Blind is reaching that population. How does the Council find and reach people who are isolated, possibly kept at home by family, and unknown to the service system?

Discussion followed:

- Chair Gartside connected the question to the Community Needs Assessment and reported on a conversation with the Executive Director of the Nevada Statewide Independent Living Council, whose approach centers on directly reaching unconnected individuals. The Council's assessment period will likely fall in the last three months of the year, and the Council has discussed incentivizing response through a small donation to a nonprofit of the respondent's choice or a modest gift card.
- Nani Watanabe noted the Lions Club was formerly very active with the blind community, that Independent Living services and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation previously partnered to reach schools, and that families often do not know where students transition after high school. At outreach fairs, families routinely report being unaware that developmental disability and other services existed. She characterized the gap as a puka in the system and suggested community gatherings that draw people in.
- Matthew Brown (chat) agreed outreach to unserved individuals is a significant challenge. Nancy Romaine (chat) suggested agencies serving blind individuals and other providers may refer people to the Council and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Chair Gartside noted the current State Plan contains a full section on outreach and on definitions of unserved and underserved, including language and cultural barriers, and suggested the next plan name specific events at which the Council will maintain a disability information table, such as the Bon Dance and the Aloha Festivals.
- Amanda Lowe reported the Council is planning talk story sessions on every island alongside broad survey distribution, to reach people who may not complete a written survey, and emphasized working as a network with the Centers for Independent Living.
- Vickie Kennedy suggested information fairs in increments across the island, noting census indications of higher disability prevalence on the North Shore than in urban Honolulu, and framing events so people are drawn in rather than treating disability as something to be hidden.

- Donald Sakamoto identified the Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) Emergency Communication Access Plan meetings, a planned Deaf community fair, Young at Heart on September 29, and the White Cane Walk in October as outreach opportunities.
- Nani Watanabe reported the State Legislative Forum next week has approximately 45 registrants and that she will gather contact information from participating resource organizations, and proposed a photograph display from the Washington, D.C. trip explaining the Council's work.
- Vickie Kennedy shared her experience: diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa in 1978 at age 32, she was her physician's first patient with the condition and had no support group or services in Hawai'i at the time, receiving rehabilitation counseling only after relocating to the continental United States in 1985. She emphasized empathy for those still isolated.
- Roy Corpuz spoke to conditions on Hawai'i Island: limited connections between communities, families historically discouraging people with disabilities from going out, inadequate public transportation, and residents relocating away for lack of services and affordability.

9. Conference Budget Update and Vote on Travel Budget

The Council previously approved \$14,000 for each of three national conferences, sufficient to send four Council members to each: the National Council on Independent Living Annual Conference; the National Association of Statewide Independent Living Councils Conference; and the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) Conference.

Following a financial review, the Finance Committee recommended reducing both the budget and the number of attendees by half. Chair Gartside noted the Council meets the following day with the Designated State Entity, which funds the Council through Innovation and Expansion (I&E) funding, and that the outcome is relevant to the vote.

Point of order (Judy Guajardo): Noted the Chair may not make a motion. The Chair acknowledged the correction.

Motion: Judy Guajardo moved to defer the conference travel budget discussion to the next meeting. Second: Brian Hauser. Result: Motion carried unanimously; no opposition. Item deferred to September, pending updates from the Designated State Entity.

10. Unfinished Business

- a. Reconstituting the Honolulu Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities (O'ahu)

Donald Sakamoto reported that on July 16, at the Kalihi Neighborhood Board, Andy Kawano, Director of Budget and Fiscal Services for the City and County of Honolulu and the Mayor's representative, stated the Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities will not be reinstated under this administration. He referred instead to existing bodies, including the Disability and Communication Access Board and the Committee for Accessible Transportation, and to Charlotte Thompson regarding the rate commission that sets fares for TheBus, TheHandi-Van, and Skyline.

Mr. Sakamoto responded that the city has a committee for elder affairs and a newly formed youth commission but none for the disability community, leaving it without a voice to city departments. The Council met with the City Managing Director in June and submitted a letter with the committee's history and justification, including mayor's committees in other counties; the response was that the city already has many committees. Mr. Sakamoto raised the question directly with the Mayor at the May 8 town hall at Castle High School. Council member Radiant Cordero introduced a resolution in January urging reestablishment of the mayor's committees, which did not result in action.

Chair's question: Asked what Plan B is. Response (Donald Sakamoto): Participate in and testify before existing committees and councils, including the Community Services elder affairs committee, which has a single disability representative in Zosimo Arista of the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities; a broader group representing multiple disabilities is needed. Chair Gartside thanked Mr. Sakamoto for his persistence and urged continued presence at these meetings.

b. Update — U.S. Department of Justice Memorandum on the Olmstead Decision

Amanda Lowe reported that 100 members of Congress sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Justice expressing serious concerns with the Olmstead memorandum discussed at the previous meeting. Congress is aware of the issue; further developments are pending.

c. Update — U.S. Department of Education Disparate Impact Regulations

The U.S. Department of Education has repealed its disparate impact regulations. The Office for Civil Rights will no longer treat policies that disproportionately harm groups of students as discriminatory unless the discrimination is intentional — particularly relevant to school discipline and suspension of students of color, where absent evidence of intent the federal government can no longer investigate whether a policy is producing disproportionate outcomes.

d. Update — Federal Fair Housing Rollbacks

Philip Ana was unable to attend but has circulated updates on federal fair housing rollbacks and their potential implications for Independent Living. Members were encouraged to review them.

e. Council Strategic Plan

Amanda Lowe reported on continued conversations with Nancy Partika, recommended to the Council by the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities. Ms. Partika's counsel is that the Council complete the Community Needs Assessment and the State Plan for Independent Living first, then take up the strategic plan. Ms. Lowe met her in person last week and found her a generous source of information and expertise. Chair Gartside clarified the distinction between the federally funded State Plan and the Council's own strategic plan, noting the Council has a rough work plan and needs a more strategic approach as it grows.

11. Upcoming Community Events and SILC Participation

Chair Gartside opened a brainstorming discussion to build a master calendar of events, disability-specific or general, at which the Council can table or participate. The Council can provide staff attendance, additional member attendance, and the SILC banner. Members were asked to email event information to the Chair or the Executive Director, and the Chair proposed making this a recurring agenda item toward a baseline annual calendar.

Date	Event	Location / Notes
August 8, 2026	Aloha Independent Living Hawai'i car wash fundraiser	In partnership with 'Ohana Fuels / Aloha Petroleum, Maui
August 11, 2026	State Legislative Forum, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Pilina Building, University of Hawai'i Maui College; with the Maui Disability Alliance; accessibility, housing, transportation, health. Council is signed up to table.
August 11, 2026	No Wrong Door meeting	A member is presenting
August 14, 2026	La'akea Night Market	Baldwin Avenue, Pā'ia, Maui. La'akea Village is a new 22-unit complex, all units designated for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Reported by Lehua Chang, who recommended Council representation to help

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ensure new disability housing is designed with residents in mind.

September 2026	Paniolo Day community event	Windward Community College; Donald Sakamoto to provide contact information
September 29, 2026	Young at Heart	Donald Sakamoto to provide information; strong opportunity to reach individuals with age-related onset of disability not connected to services
October 2026	White Cane Walk	O'ahu
October 21, 2026	Kaua'i Transition Fair, 2:00 – 6:00 p.m.	The Council has been invited
November 2026	Maui County Senior Fair	Details pending
Date to be announced	Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity (PACRIM)	University of Hawai'i Center on Disability Studies
Ongoing	Leadership and Disability Achievement Hawaii and Developmental Disabilities Council traveling mini-conferences	Statewide

Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity (PAC-RIM): Council members presented on the launch of the State Plan for Independent Living two years ago, and the next conference would be an opportunity to reflect on progress through a presentation or poster session; Aloha Independent Living Hawai'i and Access to Independence have both exhibited. Dates are not yet announced; the call for presenters typically goes out in October with submissions due at the end of December, and registration has run about \$450 per person. Nani Watanabe noted cost appears to limit local participation, recommended at minimum a Council table, and proposed a workshop on the Council's work in Hawai'i. The Chair noted PAC-RIM is a comparatively low-cost opportunity to send four members and exchange perspectives with

delegates from across the Pacific Rim. Judy Guajardo raised a news report of controversy over continued support for “PAC-RIM” in Hawai‘i; members clarified in the chat that it concerned the military RIMPAC exercise, not the disability conference.

New National Federation of the Blind chapter: Judy Guajardo reported the Valley Isle Maui chapter of the National Federation of the Blind launched the previous day with a full board and officers, following advocacy by participants in the Vision Impairment Blindness Education and Support group, a Nā Hoaloha support group that has met monthly for ten years.

Shared training with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: As a member of the State Rehabilitation Council, Chair Gartside noted the recommendation that the Division and the Council conduct shared trainings. Cheryl Matthews indicated it would be valuable for the Council to train Division counselors on Independent Living and the perspective of people with disabilities.

The Chair also raised the longer-term possibility of the Council and the Centers for Independent Living jointly convening an Independent Living conference or series of collective events.

12. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Donald Sakamoto:

- Chairs the Honolulu Mayor’s Committee on Elections Accessibility Needs Advisory Committee, serving since 2022 and reappointed April 15, 2026. He will vote in person at the district park voter service center to test machine accessibility. Voter service centers are open through the 7th, with additional in-person voting at Honolulu Hale and Kapolei Hale. He encouraged everyone to vote by whichever method works for them.
- Chairs Citizens for a Fair ADA Ride Transportation, an advocacy group that meets with the Department of Transportation Services, O’ahu Transit Services, TheBus, TheHandi-Van, and Skyline. Next meeting: Thursday, August 20, 9:45 – 11:45 a.m., hybrid and in person. He thanked Amanda Lowe and Patrick Gartside for sponsoring the meetings and reported that after 20 years riding public transportation and 16 advocating, the relationship with the department has moved from adversarial to constructive.
- Chairs the Committee for Accessible Transportation under the Department of Transportation Services, comprising Easterseals, Catholic Charities, the Disability and Communication Access Board, Kōkua, and Ho’opono, with ex officio officials. Next meeting confirmed for September 10; the agenda posts six days in advance and minutes will be posted. He will circulate notice to members.

Ann da Silva: Reported voting electronically and using the ballot tracking system, receiving confirmation by email and text that her ballot was received and counted. She reported the electronic system is working well and encouraged everyone to vote regardless of method or party.

13. Adjournment

Motion: Donald Sakamoto moved to adjourn. Second: Vickie Kennedy. Result: Motion carried unanimously; no opposition.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m. Hawai'i Standard Time.