

From: CLK Council Info
Sent: Monday, June 01, 2015 10:04 AM

Subject: Council Speaker Registration/Testimony

Speaker Registration/Testimony

All fields marked "(*)" are required and must be completed in order for this form to be valid.
Note: Registrations are not accepted prior to the agendas being posted.

Name(*) Jeanne Torres

Phone (*) 808-941-1088

Email (*) j.torres@guidedogshawaii.com

Meeting Date (*) 2015-06-03

Council/PH Committee (*) Council

Agenda Item (*) Number 13 Operating Budget

Your position on the matter (*) Comment

Representing (*) Organization

Organization Guide Dogs of Hawaii (Adaptive Aids, Canines & Advocacy for the Blind)

Do you wish to speak at the hearing? (*) Yes

RECEIVED
CITY CLERK
C & C OF HONOLULU
2015 JUN - 1 AM 10:54

Written Testimony

Jeanne Torres, Executive Director Guide Dogs of Hawaii Written Testimony Guide Dogs of Hawaii, a nonprofit 501(C)3 organization incorporated in 1955 is funded by an endowment from the Jack and Marie Lord Foundation and long standing partner, Aloha United Way. Campaign Chairman and former Attorney General, Michael Lilly has formed a fundraising cabinet to further the organization's reach in the community. Guide Dogs of Hawaii is requesting consideration for \$150,000.00 from the City and County of Honolulu. The purpose for these funds is to provide technology aids specifically designed to meet the needs of blind students so that they may have meaningful learning experiences. We know that the Department of Education is required to provide accommodations for the 226 blind students currently enrolled in the system. However, we do understand the costs to meet these needs are high and difficult to balance with the greater population needs in the system. We also recognize and appreciate how the teachers, staff, and administrators seek and implement alternative ways to provide accommodations. While all this is appreciated, it is not meaningful for

the blind student and, as a result; these students are left behind. Historically, Guide Dogs of Hawaii focused their objectives in providing guide dogs for Hawaii residents in order to overcome the rigid quarantine rules we had in place until the late 1990s. The modification of the quarantine rules since opened the opportunity for Hawaii blind residents to travel in and out of the state with their guide dogs. Moreover, this opened yet another opportunity for blind residents to obtain their guide dogs from mainland training centers. These significant changes provided Guide Dogs of Hawaii the means to explore other ways to serve the blind communities in our state. In our research, we have identified several disturbing situations: • Blind students continue to fall behind in the mainstream of education • Blind students do not receive their transcribed learning materials in a timely fashion • Teachers for the Visually Impaired are overwhelmed with their duties due to continued shortage in staff • Teachers of the Visually Impaired and other unqualified individuals transcribe learning materials for the Blind students • Economy is steadily advancing into a more diverse and fast paced technological culture • Majority of blind students are from low-income households • High costs of technological aids make it impossible for low income parents to obtain them for their children Because these situations are not prevalent in our community, it is understandable that we would miss it. Now that we have uncovered these disturbing situations, we have a responsibility and obligation to demonstrate to our Blind youths that they matter. With the City Council of Honolulu's support, we have the opportunity to demonstrate that our Blind youths do matter. With your support and our delivery of services, the Blind students will have the chance to have meaningful learning and social experiences. It is with our greatest desire and compassion to give these students the chance to demonstrate their potential. It is with your help that we can do this and do it well. Never before has Guide Dogs of Hawaii sought funds from another source but even for us, we cannot do this with positive outcomes without the financial aid of outside funding sources. We request your support to give the Blind students of Hawaii the chance to improve their learning experiences. Supporting these children with electronic mobility aids and other services levels the playing field with their non-disabled peers. It allows them to grow up with confidence and the ability to secure better jobs and high education as adults.

**Testimony
Attachment**

**Accept Terms and
Conditions (*)** 1