

HA‘ILONO KINA

TO BRING THE NEWS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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SPECIAL EDITION – PARKING

PARKING-RELATED LEGISLATION IN 2008

The 2008 Legislature was filled with nine bills that attempted to modify the Hawaii Revised Statutes relating to parking for persons with disabilities. The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB), as the state agency that administers the statewide program in cooperation with the four counties, was very active with strong positions on these bills.

Nine bills introduced in both the Senate and House proposed to issue either parking placards or license plates to nursing homes or long term care facilities to assist in transporting their patients or residents in the community. DCAB’s position follows federal guidance that standardizes the eligibility for placards to people not agencies. After all, it is a person that has a disability or mobility impairment, not an agency. Since a placard is transferable between vehicles as long as the placard is being used in conjunction with the transport of the placard holder, DCAB believes that the ‘placard should follow the person’ even if it is, at times, more inconvenient for the provider. In addition DCAB is concerned about abuse, as the placard would not be issued with an ID card to identify a person, thus making the placard very easily misused and difficult to enforce proper use. Those bills have all died or were held. However, in recognition of the difficulty for some larger facilities, such as nursing homes, DCAB will be working with those facilities and the National Association of Social Workers after the Legislature adjourns to examine possible solutions for their transportation needs.

A bill introduced in the Senate would have allowed women in their third trimester of pregnancy to receive a temporary placard to park in stalls reserved for people with disabilities. This bill did not receive a hearing and is dead. Nonetheless, DCAB took a position opposing the bill. DCAB recognizes the difficulty that many women face as their delivery date approaches but does not believe that all women categorically require a placard. While many people have various reasons for being inconvenienced, we must remember that the more accessible parking stalls are used as a ‘convenience,’ the less available they are for people with mobility limitations who ‘require them as a necessity’ to access a program or a site.

A final bill introduced in the Senate would have allowed people with disabilities who have a placard to drive in the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane on the freeway. Wow! Talk about potential abuse! This bill also did not receive a hearing and is dead. DCAB reminds everyone that the parking placard or

license plate is issued because a person has a disability walking, not driving or riding in a car, and will oppose this bill if it is introduced again.

Would you like to receive updates on bills relating to parking for persons with disabilities? The Legislature pays particular attention to the testimonies from persons with disabilities who are users of this valued program. If you would like to be on our list serve, please email us at dcab@doh.hawaii.gov.

ABUSE OF PLACARDS

Have you ever seen somebody hang a disability parking placard from a rearview mirror and then dash into a store? Did it seem suspicious to you? Was the person quite young, perhaps a new driver? Although statistics are not available, the abuse of accessible parking spaces is a problem nationally. Often, it's a case of somebody "borrowing" a placard that belongs to a relative. Such borrowing can result in confiscation of a placard and a fine of \$260. To address the situation, DCAB has arranged to visit driver's education classes at Hawaii public high schools. Mark Obatake, a disability rights advocate for over 20 years, has volunteered to give short talks to high school students to make them aware of the Americans with Disabilities Act and to encourage them not to abuse accessible parking spaces. If you would like Mark to come to your school, he can be contacted through DCAB in Honolulu at (808) 586-8121.

DO OLD PLACARDS EVER DIE???

What happens to an expired placard once it's replaced by a new placard? Does it wind up in the wastebasket? Not at all. When a person renews their permit, he/she is given a postage paid business reply envelope. It is sent to DCAB where the placard number on the electronic record of the person it belonged to is marked "Returned" and then it is destroyed through safe, nonpolluting, EPA-approved incineration. That way, we know it isn't laying around somewhere waiting to be abused. In FY 06-07, 8,541 expired placards were returned through this process. Thank you for helping get the old placards off the streets!

THE OOPS! FACTOR

Applications for disability parking placards have 2 sections: Side 1 is for the applicant to fill out and Side 2 is for the physician's certification. Occasionally, an applicant forgets to fill out Side 1 and attempts to obtain a placard with the physician's certification only. We call this The Oops! Factor. Because of the possibility for fraud, such an application is rejected by county staff and the original copy is sent to DCAB. When we receive it, we contact the physician's office and inform them that a new application will have to be certified. Hopefully, the applicant will remember to fill out Side 1 of the application next time!

PLACARD RETRIEVAL

Besides procuring and issuing disability parking placards through the counties, the Statewide Program on Parking has implemented an initiative to retrieve placards from deceased placard holders. About twice a year, DCAB asks the

State Vital Statistics Office (Death Records) at the Department of Health to cross-reference their database and ours. When the same name, birth date and identification appear on both lists, the name is placed onto a third list. This list becomes a mailing roster to retrieve placards from the families of deceased placard holders. DCAB mails out between 25 and 50 such letters a week, asking the recipients to return the unexpired placard and identification card in a return mail envelope included with the letter. Over the course of a year, hundreds of unexpired placards are retrieved and destroyed this way. Of course, many relatives return the placards and identification cards on their own, which is a big help!

NEW POLICE OFFICER Interview With Sgt. Emilio Laganse

Sgt. Emilio Laganse, a 26-year veteran of the Honolulu Police Department, was recently assigned to lead the Volunteer Special Enforcement Officer Program which enforces laws and ordinances concerning accessible parking. Recently, he visited DCAB to discuss his plans for the program.

What is the Volunteer Enforcement Program?

The name that we use is VSEO, which means Volunteer Special Enforcement Officers. It's a program that's been around, but just recently came to fruition. It utilizes volunteers commissioned as police officers to issue parking citations. Initially it concentrated mainly on disability parking, but the duties have expanded to cover other parking violations.

What are the goals of the volunteer program?

As far as disability parking placards are concerned, the goals of the program are to cite persons that misuse placards and accessible parking spaces. Sometimes people misuse placards that belong to relatives for their own personal use. That's an abuse of a privilege. We need to discourage that.

How and where do you find volunteers?

They come from all over. We currently have 9 volunteers that were already onboard when I came to lead the program. We are in the process of recruiting more volunteers. Right now, it's by word of mouth. We also make requests to talk to neighborhood boards and utilize the Citizen Patrol Academy, which visits schools and teaches neighborhood groups. They do some canvassing for us. We don't want too many volunteers, either. With the limited amount of resources and personnel we already have, we want to build up slowly with the goal of 30 to 40 volunteers.

Do the volunteers work for the same hours as a regular police officer?

We ask for 20 hours per month, which is about 5 hours per week. But I have some volunteers that work more than 20 hours per month. Some work Monday through Friday and some only 3 days a week. The majority, say 90%, are retired. A few have full time jobs and steal time on weekends, and even after work to go on

patrol.

What kind of training do they receive to be volunteers?

They get roughly about 40 hours of training. It covers a large spectrum of parking violations. They also have to learn the policies of the police department because they are going to be working as part of the department and need to know standards of conduct, and all the policies that govern them on and off duty. It's almost like going to school, except it's a condensed version.

If someone wants to become a volunteer how can they apply?

They can call our office at (808) 529-3136 and I will set up an interview. They will be interviewed either by myself or someone on the staff. After they are interviewed, they submit an application and we perform a background check. Once that's accomplished and everything is in order, they begin training.

If you had a advice to give to people that volunteer, what would it be?

All we ask of the volunteers is that they don't patrol in the area where they live. Avoid confrontation, that's my advice.

Thank you!

PARKING DATA - FISCAL YEAR 06-07

Here are some facts about the parking program for persons with disabilities:

- 30,423 placards were issued in FY 06-07 (includes new and renewals).
- 365 license plates were issued in FY 06-07.
- 84% of the placards issued were 4-year placards; 16% were temporary.
- There was a 19% increase of placard holders from the past two years.
- The top 4 disabilities of placard holders were: orthopedic, arthritic, neurological, and heart conditions.
- The offices that processed the most placard applications were:
 - Ala Moana (4,589)
 - Kalihi (3,624)
 - Kahului (2,850)
 - Hilo (2,821)
 - Kapolei (1,933).

For more information about these statistics, please contact Peter Harrer by phone (808) 586-8121 or by email at peter.harrer@doh.hawaii.gov.

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