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TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 428

March 27, 2025
3:30 p.m.
Room 308 and Videoconference

RELATING TO WITNESS FEES

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill (S.B.) No. 428 amends Sections 607-12 and 621-7, HRS, to:

1) increase the fees paid to witnesses in civil trials from \$4 a day for attending court and \$6 for attending court coming from another island to \$30 a day and \$36 a day, respectively; 2) increase the fees paid to non-expert witnesses in criminal trials from \$20 a day to \$40 a day; 3) change the fees paid to witnesses in civil trials for travel expenses from \$0.20 a mile to the mileage allowance prescribed by the Administrator of General Services; and 4) authorize reimbursement for witnesses in civil trials for their use of common carriers to get to and from court.

B&F is annually appropriated \$1,893,933 in general funds to pay for witness fees and other related expenses. Should this amount be reached, payments are then halted and deferred to the next fiscal year. As such, any statutory increase in witness fees and/or reimbursements will require a proportionate appropriation increase in order for B&F to disburse these funds in a timely manner.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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March 27, 2025

S.B. No. 428: RELATING TO WITNESS FEES

Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender **supports S.B. No. 428**

The Office of the Public Defender submits that there is a need to increase the compensation to witnesses in criminal cases. The increase from \$20 to \$40 is an acknowledgment that witnesses are a critical part of the administration of justice. It is understood that the fee is nominal. However, this increase helps offset the time away from work and family that witnesses spend participating in criminal and civil proceedings. We submit that this measure is essential for the administration of justice.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.