

HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411 HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: 586-8636 FAX: 586-8655 TDD: 568-8692

February 28, 2017
Rm. 308, 11:00 a.m.

To: The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Finance
From: Linda Hamilton Krieger, Chair
and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: H.B. No. 1420 H.D. 1

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

H.B. No. 1420 H.D.1 appropriates funds to provide for burial grants for Filipino-American veterans of World War II, to cover funeral and burial costs, including the cost of returning their remains to the Philippines for burial.

The HCRC strongly supports H.B. No. 1420 H.D. 1. This appropriation is one small way that Hawai‘i can join the United States in efforts to pay a debt of gratitude and justice, attempting to remedy a history of injustice, broken promises, and discriminatory treatment suffered by a now dwindling generation of heroic Filipino Veterans who served under US command, were promised citizenship and veteran’s benefits, and to this day continue to suffer the consequences of broken promises and belated remedies.

During WWII, members of the Philippine Armed Forces served in the US Armed Forces in the war against Japan. They were among a broader class of non-citizens serving in the US Armed Forces who were offered naturalization as part of the 1942 enactment of the Second War Powers Act, which waived a number of usual naturalization requirements, including residence in the United States and literacy and education testing in English. The cut-off date for application was set at December 31, 1946.

The US authorized Vice Consul George H. Ennis in August 1945 to naturalize Filipino servicemen pursuant to the law. However, the applicability of the law to Filipino servicemen was questioned, and then Attorney General Tom Clark revoked Ennis' authority to naturalize in September 26, 1945. Eligible Filipino servicemen were then only able to naturalize from August through December, 1946. As a result, only about 4,000 out of more than 250,000 Filipino servicemen applied for and were granted naturalization during those few short months.

With the enactment of the Rescission Act in 1946, these Filipino Veterans who served under US Command were singled out and denied full and equal veterans status and benefits given to others.

This injustice spawned a host of litigated cases on behalf of Filipino Veterans, from the 1960s through the 1980s. Then, in 1990 Congress incorporated provisions for special naturalization for Filipino Veterans in the 1990 Immigration Act, followed by piecemeal legislation providing for limited benefits for Filipino Veterans, but not equity and full veterans benefits.

Many of those Filipino Veterans who naturalized since 1990 have waited for years for relative visas to become available, so their petitions to be reunited with their adult children in the United States can be approved and visas issued. Fewer and fewer remain with us, waiting, as those who fought under US command in WWII are now aged well into their 90s. The HCRC strongly supports H.B. No. 1420 H.D. 1, which provides for those who wish to return to the Philippines to be buried and reunited with their families in death, too late to be reunited in life.

Filipino American Citizens League

Jake Manegdeg, President
P. O. Box 270126 * Honolulu, Hawai'i 96827

House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Capitol, House Conference Room 308
February 28, 2017, 11 a.m.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1420 HD1 RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS BURIAL ASSISTANCE

To: Chair Sylvia Luke, Vice Chair Ty J.K. Cullen, and House Finance Committee Members
From: Jake Manegdeg, President, Filipino American Citizens League
Subject: Relating to Filipino Veterans Burial Assistance

My name is Jake Manegdeg. I am the president of the Filipino American Citizens League. The Filipino American Citizens League was formed over twenty years ago to contribute to the advancement of civil rights and social justice for minority groups, underserved populations, and vulnerable communities through education, advocacy, and social action.

The League strongly supports this bill, which “Appropriates funds for burial grants for qualifying Filipino-American veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines; provided that federal funds remain unavailable and there remain eligible Filipino-American veterans living in the State.”

This is important because the 1946 Rescission Act wrongly rescinded the full veterans benefits promised to them upon enlistment and completion of service to the U.S. Armed Forces. As a result of having family reunification withdrawn and delayed, veterans are aging alone and desire to be buried in the Philippines.

As a matter of parity with other WWII allied forces and the dignity of our elderly veterans, who sacrificed for our country, we urge you to support the passage of this bill. Thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to offer our strong support.

Very Sincerely,

Jake Manegdeg, President
Filipino American Citizens League



Testimony in Strong Support of
HB 1420 HD1 RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS BURIAL ASSISTANCE
House Committee on Finance
State Capitol, House Conference Room 308
February 28, 2017, 11 a.m.

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen and Committee Members

From: Amy Agbayani, Co-chair Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights (HFCR)
3432 B-1 Kalihi St. Honolulu, Hawaii, 96819

Subject: Relating to Filipino Veterans Burial Assistance

HFCR supports programs and policies that seek to fair treatment for individuals and communities. We strongly support HB 1420 hd1 which "Appropriates funds for burial grants for qualifying Filipino-American veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines; provided that federal funds remain unavailable and there remain eligible Filipino American veterans living in the State." The veterans living in our state do not have resources to transport their remains to the Philippines if that is their final wish. Although burial grants to cover this cost were statutorily established, there are no funds available.

We respectfully request you approve this bill that demonstrates Hawaii's recognition of our Filipino veteran's service and sacrifice. Thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to offer our strong support.



Nursing Advocates & Mentors, Inc.

... a non-profit organization with a mission to address the global nursing shortage by providing guidance and assistance for nursing colleagues to obtain their professional license in nursing.

P.O. Box 2034 Aiea, HI 96701

E-mail: namihonolulu@yahoo.com

*Bea Ramos-Razon, RN,
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Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1420 HB1 RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS BURIAL ASSISTANCE

House Committee on Finance

February 28, 2017, 11 a.m.

Hawai'i State Capitol, House Conference Room 308

To: Chair Sylvia Luke, Vice Chair Rep. Ty J.K. Cullen
House Finance Committee Members

From: Beatrice Ramos-Razon, RN, FACDA
President, Nursing Advocates and Mentors, Inc.

Subject: Appropriates funds for burial grants for qualifying Filipino-American veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines. (HB1420 HD1)

My name is Beatrice Ramos-Razon. As the founder and president of NAMI (Nursing Advocates & Mentors, Inc.), I am proud to submit our strong support for this bill. NAMI's membership is comprised of over 75 volunteer nurses, instructors, allied health care professionals, and Filipino leaders, who are dedicated to improve the health of Hawai'i's people through education, mentoring, advocacy and service.

As a registered voter, constituent in District 32, Salt Lake, and a first generation Filipina, I am upset over the indignity our Filipino WWII veterans have endured into their twilight years, despite their courageous service to our country. Congress stripped them of veterans' benefits in 1946, including family reunification. Thus, many are frail, alone, living in poverty, and want to be buried in the Philippines. Please find a way to use the burial funds offered to them here, to apply to the transportation and funeral costs in the Philippines.

Thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to submit testimony to strongly encourage its passage.

Sincerely,

Beatrice Ramos Razon, RN, FACDA
President, Nursing Advocates and Mentors, Inc.



House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Capitol, House Conference Room 308
February 28, 2017, 11 a.m.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1420 HD1
RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS BURIAL ASSISTANCE

To: Chair Sylvia Luke, Vice Chair Ty J.K. Cullens and House Finance Committee Members
From: Charlene Cuaresma, Chair
NaFFAA-National Federation of Filipino American Associations Region 12
Subject: Strong Support of Filipino Veterans Burial Assistance

My name is Charlene Cuaresma, Chair, NaFFAA Region 12, which represents the interests of Filipinos in Hawai'i, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas Islands. We are an affiliate of the National NaFFAA. Washington policy-makers, private industry and national advocacy groups recognize NaFFAA as the Voice of Filipinos and Filipino Americans throughout the United States. We are a non-partisan, non-profit national affiliation of more than five hundred Filipino-American institutions and umbrella organizations that span twelve regions throughout the continental United States and U.S. Pacific territories.

I am proud to submit strong support for this bill. Since 1946, Hawai'i's Congressional delegation has joined our Filipino leaders in leading and sustaining our fierce charge to reinstate veterans' benefits for our Filipino WWII veterans, but to no avail. As a result of the wrongful and cruel passage of the Rescission Act, today, a declining number of our Filipino WWII veterans, now in their 80's and 90's, are left with no relatives because the provision of family reunification was rescinded. We are saddened and angered that it has come to this indignant, pathetic quandary for our veterans to face their death in poverty and loneliness.

Your consideration to fund transportation to the Philippines and burial costs there in lieu of burial space and costs for our rapidly dying Filipino WWII veterans in Hawai'i is greatly appreciated. Rising to become the second largest ethnic group in the state, Filipino Americans in Hawai'i owe our deep gratitude to our Filipino WWII veterans for the opportunities we gained because of their great sacrifices in the U.S. Armed Forces, and the contributions the majority of them made in Hawai'i's labor force as agricultural and service industry workers.

Thank you for hearing this bill, and for the opportunity to offer our strong support. Please join us to champion our Filipino WWII veterans' last wish to return to the Philippines for their burial.

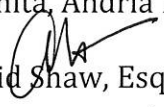
Sincerely,

Charlene Cuaresma, Chair, National Federation of Filipino American Associations Region 12

Law Office of Abelina Madrid Shaw, AAL, LLLC

810 Richards Street, Suite 960
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Phone: (808) 523-5979 Fax: (808) 523-5979

TO: Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair
Rep. Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance
Members: Romy M. Cachola, Isaac W. Choy, Lynn DeCoite, Cedric Asuega Gates,
Daniel Holt, Jarrett Keohokalole, Bertrand Kobayashi, Matthew S. LoPresti,
Nicole E. Lowen, Nadine K. Nakamura, James Kunane Tokioka, Sean Quinlan,
Kyle T. Yamashita, Andria P.L. Tupola, Gene Ward

FROM:  Abelina Madrid Shaw, Esq.

DATE: February 28, 2017 (11:00 a.m.) Conference Room 308

RE: IN SUPPORT OF HB 1420, HDI (HSCR423) RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS
BURIAL ASSISTANCE

In 1992, after having served in WWII, many Filipino veterans of that war were allowed by the U.S. Government to become U.S. citizens. Middle-aged then, they came to Hawaii, assimilated into our way of life, with hopes of a better life for them and their children left behind.

While here, they have many life choices, but two most compelling options were:

- (1) to stay and die here in Hawaii and wait for their children to become U.S. Citizens;
- (2) to return to their homeland some day.

For the Veterans, now in their late 80's and early 90's, frail, but still hopeful, the options have become less realistic. Some will hang on to choose option (1), but some yearn to go home to be with grandchildren and not be alone.

Short of each of the above, the burial benefits that would allow for a more dignified burial has not been totally forthcoming. This bill will cover some of the attendant costs – costs now borne by their spouses or fellow Veterans' donations. While this legislature saw fit to provide for burial grants in Chapter 363, the funds authorized have been depleted. Initially, it raised hopes that either the Federal Government or the State would see that options for elderly Veterans may not really be options.

Support of this bill will promise a more dignified passing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.

House Committee on Finance
Hawai'i State Capitol, House Conference Room 308
February 28, 2017, 11 a.m.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1420 HD1
RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS BURIAL ASSISTANCE

To: Chair Sylvia Luke, Vice Chair Ty J.K. Cullen
House Finance Committee Members

From: Jean Jeremiah, Private Citizen

Subject: Strong Support of Filipino Veterans Burial Assistance

My name is Jean Jeremiah. I am speaking as a private citizen. I am proud to submit my full support of this bill. I served as former President of the Oahu Filipino Community Council, where many of our Filipino cultural events aimed to raise scholarship funds for deserving Filipino youth to pursue their education and career aspirations.

I support this bill because our Filipino WWII Veterans deserve the respect to have their last wish granted to be buried in the Philippines. I am still outraged that after their gallant service and sacrifice for freedom in the world and for our nation, the 1946 Rescission Act withdrew their veterans' benefits. In spite of decades of advocacy to reinstate their due benefits, including family reunification, Congress has rejected their requests until today. Consequently, some of our Veterans are facing their end of life stage isolated and poor. But let us also note that many of our Veterans have contributed to our State's economy in their prime years as hardworking laborers in Hawai'i's service industry with meager wages.

Your assistance with this bill asks for the State's compassion to do right by our veterans to utilize burial funds here to cover transportation and burial costs in the Philippines, so the last wish of our Veterans can be respected and honored.

Thank you for hearing this bill and for the chance to offer my strong support for its passage.

Very Sincerely,

Jean Jeremiah

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1420, HD1, RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS
BURIAL ASSISTANCE

PRESENTATION TO THE
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

BY

MR. RONALD P. HAN
DIRECTOR OF STATE OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

February 28, 2017
11:00 a.m.

Good morning, Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the Committee:

I'm Ron Han, Director of the State Office of Veterans Services. I appreciate this opportunity to provide written testimony **in support** of the concepts in House Bill 1420, HD1.

This measure appropriates funds for the burial grants for qualifying Filipino-American veterans to provide funeral and burial services and transportation of their remains to the Philippines.

The OVS supports the concepts and intent expressed in this measure as long as its implementation does not impact or replace the priorities set forth in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of Hawaii's Veterans and their families.

House Committee on Finance
Hawai`i State Capitol, House Conference Room 308
February 28, 2017, 11 a.m.

Testimony in Strong Support of HB 1420 HD1
RELATING TO FILIPINO VETERANS BURIAL ASSISTANCE

To: Chair Sylvia Luke, Vice Chair Ty J.K. Cullen, House Finance Committee Members

From: Davelyn Quijano, Private Citizen

Subject: Strong Support of Filipino Veterans Burial Assistance

I strongly support this bill. I am speaking as a private citizen. My name is Davelyn Quijano, president of the Sinait National High School Alumni Association of Hawaii. Our alumni association was established in 1995 and has grown to 60 members in Hawaii. I also serve as the secretary of the Anak ti Sinait of Hawai`i (Children of Sinait). Our alumni association prides itself in volunteerism both in Hawai`i and the Philippines, where we perpetuate our culture, join in disaster relief efforts, finance medical missions to the Philippines, foster good health through outreach programs to our Filipino community, empower our youth through scholarship programs, offer aid to deceased members and their beneficiaries, and engage network opportunities to contribute successfully to Hawaii's economy through entrepreneurship.

Many of our organization members have family members who are World War II veterans. I am speaking up for our veterans who have no immediate family in Hawai'i because the family reunification veterans' benefit was taken away by Congress in 1946. Passage of this bill to pay for transportation and burial costs in the Philippines will apply to only a declining number of our veterans here. The funds required to grant a Filipino WWII Veteran's last dying wish is a sacrifice among the competing priorities with its limited budget. However, I appeal to our lawmakers' values and guiding principles to consider the compelling sacrifice our veterans made by putting themselves in harm's way to facilitate an early end to World War II in dangerous combat in the Pacific Basin. Unlike Congress and the federal government, our Aloha State has the opportunity to show our few remaining Filipino WWII Veterans the justice and honor they deserve at the time of their death by funding transportation to the Philippines and burial costs there for those who are eligible.

Thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to express my full support of this bill.

Warmest regards,

Davelyn Quijano

LATE

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
 Sent: Monday, February 27, 2017 8:59 PM
 To: FINTestimony
 Cc: hawaiiifishingfanatic@gmail.com
 Subject: Submitted testimony for HB1420 on Feb 28, 2017 11:00AM

HB1420

Submitted on: 2/27/2017

Testimony for FIN on Feb 28, 2017 11:00AM in Conference Room 308

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Don Aweau	Individual	Support	No

Comments: In steadfast support of HB1420 and the long overdue honors that should be afforded to Filipino-American military veterans. In remembrance of their many sacrifices, it would be a small price to pay. They are all, after all, as are all military service members who served honorably, are well-deserving of a honorable sendoff when they pass.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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