



*The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i*

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Judiciary**

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 4, 2020, 10:01 a.m.  
Hawai‘i State Capitol, Conference Room 016

by

Rod Maile

Administrative Director of the Courts

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

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**Bill No. and Title:** Senate Bill No. 2008, Relating to Civil Legal Services.

**Purpose:** Senate Bill No. 2008 appropriates moneys from the general fund for civil legal services for low- and moderate-income persons to be purchased by the Judiciary.

**Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary strongly supports Senate Bill No. 2008 to appropriate \$800,000 for FY 2021 for civil legal services providers to deliver civil legal services to low- and moderate-income persons. Civil legal services providers extend a lifeline to the most vulnerable persons in our community. It should be noted that the Judiciary has also requested \$500,000 in its supplemental budget bill (Senate Bill No. 2116) for civil legal services for low- and moderate- income persons with the desire that this amount be placed in the Judiciary’s budget base to provide a continuous source of funding for these services.

For FYs 2019 and 2020, the Judiciary received one – time funding of \$450,000 and \$500,000, respectively, to provide these services. With this funding, the Judiciary awarded civil legal services contracts each year to the Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i (LASH) and Volunteer Legal Services Hawai‘i (VLSH).

For FY 2019, LASH reported that it closed 3,258 cases, which affected the lives of over 5,800 low-income persons in priority areas, such as support for families, keeping children safe and secure, preserving the home, foreclosure prevention, maintaining economic stability, and



Senate Bill No. 2008, Relating to Civil Legal Services  
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protecting consumers. Services included providing legal advice, preparing legal documents, and providing representation in court and administrative actions. For the first three months of FY 2020, 1,196 cases were closed affecting the lives of 3,317 low income individuals.

For FY 2019, VLSH reported that it had opened 2,827 intakes for residents seeking legal assistance in areas such as family law, collections and bankruptcy, probate matters, and landlord-tenant disputes. VLSH also received over 700 referrals for pro bono services for advice and counsel, conducted 148 pro se uncontested divorce workshops and 117 re-employment and community service project workshops. For the first three reporting months of FY 2020, 300 intakes were completed, 233 referrals for pro bono services for advice and counsel were provided, and 36 uncontested divorce workshops and 55 re-employment and community service projects workshops were held.

The Judiciary supports funding for civil legal services whether it be the \$800,000 for FY 2021 in this bill or the \$500,000 requested in the Judiciary's budget bill. We note, however, that whichever amount is determined, it will still be well below the funding amount of \$2.1 million that was recommended by the working group assembled pursuant to House Resolution No. 12, H.D.1 and Senate Resolution No. 6, S.D. 1 (2015) in the "Plan for the Administration of Funding for Civil Legal Services," which was submitted to the legislature on December 30, 2015.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2008.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



PANKAJ BHANOT  
DIRECTOR

CATHY BETTS  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

January 31, 2020

TO: The Honorable Chair Karl Rhoads  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2008 – RELATING TO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES**

Hearing: February 4, 2020, 10:01 a.m.  
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to appropriate funds to the Judiciary to purchase civil legal services for low and moderate income persons.

In addition to financial assistance, food assistance, medical insurance coverage, and other services and benefits, recipients and applicants of DHS services often require civil legal services to meet or obtain fundamental needs. Assisting families with addressing their complex legal issues will remove barriers that hamper residents' ability to gain employment, permanent housing, a violence free family home, as well as to uphold consumer protection and fair housing laws. Attending to the civil legal needs of low income families, will allow families to concentrate on the day to day care and needs of their children, disabled or elderly family members to improve overall health and well-being.

DHS participated in the work of the HCR 12 HD1 (2015) and SR 6 SD1 (2015) working groups that recommended increased funding for civil legal services for Hawaii's low-income residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



LEGAL AID  
SOCIETY OF HAWAII

Telephone: (808) 536-4302 • Fax: (808) 527-8088  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 37375 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96837-0375  
924 Bethel Street • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Joseph Boivin, Jr.  
President, Board of Directors

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina, Esq.  
Executive Director

**TESTIMONY ON SB2008**

Committee on Judiciary

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice-Chair

February 4, 2020 at 10:01 a.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii submits testimony in strong support of SB2008 – Relating to Civil Legal Services.

This funding would go to ensure that general revenue funding for civil legal services is available. Civil legal services are critical in that they can provide real world solutions to help families in crisis find stability and hope.

Over the years, the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i has received general funds from the state which has enabled us to provide key civil legal services across the state. The Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i has provided civil legal services to the community for 70 years and we are the only legal services organization in the state to have offices on each of the major Hawaiian islands, including four offices on Oahu (Bethel Street, Chinatown, Waianae and Kaneohe) and two on Hawai'i Island (Kona and Hilo). Our staff regularly assist residents of Hawai'i to navigate and solve basic issues which require legal interventions. In 2019, our staff closed over 6,800 cases in legal areas ranging from family, housing, consumer, foreclosure, public benefits, elder law, homelessness, immigration, language access, and child welfare.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina  
Executive Director

Trever Asam  
Board President

Angela Kuo Min  
Executive Director



**VOLUNTEER LEGAL**  
SERVICES HAWAII

545 Queen Street, Suite 100  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813  
Phone: (808) 528-7050  
Fax: (808) 524-2147

[www.vlsh.org](http://www.vlsh.org)

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. No. 2008 –  
RELATING TO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES  
Committee on Judiciary – Room 016  
February 4, 2020 10:01a.m.  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair**

CHAIR RHOADS, VICE CHAIR KEOHOKALOOLE, AND MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE:

Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii (“Volunteer Legal”) submits its testimony in support of S.B. No. 2008 – Relating to Civil Legal Services, for the \$800,000 funding for the Judiciary to purchase civil legal services for low and moderate income residents of Hawaii. Volunteer Legal is thankful and very appreciative to Committee on Judiciary for including funding for civil legal services.

In the last 38 years, Volunteer Legal has partnered with volunteer attorneys in the provision of civil legal assistance to individuals and families of Hawaii. In 2019, with Volunteer Legal’s 7 full time staff members, Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii conducted over 3,000 intakes. Volunteer Legal staff helped coordinate with our pro bono attorneys that resulted in over 1,500 services in legal advice and counsel, clinics, brief services and/or full representations and hundreds more received legal information at our education seminars and outreaches.

Volunteer Legal matches individuals with attorneys from the community that they would not otherwise would have been able to retain, assisting them in their family law, estate planning, bankruptcy, and/or various district court matters. If not for Volunteer Legal Services, these individuals would have gone without legal help. Volunteer Legal’s pool of attorneys logged over 3,200 pro bono hours and donated over \$800,000 value in legal services in 2019 alone. Volunteer Legal looks forward to continuing and expanding our programs to more residents of Hawaii.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony. We respectfully request your passage of \$800,000 in funding for purchase of civil legal services in S.B. No. 2008 – Relating to Civil Legal Services.

Sincerely,  
Angela Kuo Min  
Executive Director



Hon. Joseph E. Cardoza (Ret.)  
Chair

Derek R. Kobayashi  
Vice Chair

## HAWAII ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

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Diane T. Ono  
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Hon. Michael K. Soong

February 3, 2020

***Testimony of Derek Kobayashi, Vice Chair of the Access to Justice Commission, in support of Senate Bill 2008, Relating to Civil Legal Services***

Dear Senator Rhoads and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

The Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission strongly supports Senate Bill 2008, which would provide an appropriation to civil legal service providers. These organizations, which include the Legal Aid Society, Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii, and others, provide critical legal services to residents who cannot afford a lawyer.

These organizations have served thousands of our residents over a long period of time, but their financial support varies from year-to-year, and there are many residents that they are not able to serve because of financial constraints. These organizations and the Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission appreciate the support the Legislature has provided over many years, and we hope that support can be continued.

We appreciate the committee bringing this legislation forward as a vehicle to provide financial support.

Respectfully submitted,

Derek Kobayashi  
Vice Chair  
Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission

Cc: Hon. Joseph E. Cardoza (Ret.)  
Chair  
Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission

**SB-2008**

Submitted on: 2/3/2020 3:40:28 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/4/2020 10:01:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jennifer Azuma Chrupalyk	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**LATE**

**SB-2008**

Submitted on: 2/3/2020 12:26:32 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/4/2020 10:01:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Tred Eyerly	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a board member of Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii, I ask that you please support SB 2008 which will help ensure that our less fortunate will have access to legal services.