



Sen HMS Cmte
Tues, Mar 24, 2009
2:15 pm
room 016

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

March 23, 2009

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Members of the Senate Human Services Committee

FROM: Debbie Shimizu, LSW
National Association of Social Workers, Hawaii Chapter

RE: HB 1064 HD1 Proposed SD1 - **SUPPORT**

Chair Chun Oakland and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Debbie Shimizu, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Hawaii Chapter. I am also a member of the Financial Assistance Advisory Council (FAAC) of DHS and the Welfare and Employment Rights Coalition (WERC). **NASW supports the proposed SD1.**

The 5,100 temporarily disabled individuals currently on General Assistance (GA) will be receiving letters in April informing them that their assistance check will be cut from \$469/mon to \$234/mon in April, May and June. How can we ask anyone to live on \$234/month?

These individuals are temporarily disabled and may be in a transitional situation, just getting out of treatment or waiting to get onto the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. Many of them use this money to pay rent and other living expenses (utilities, clothing, etc). They may be renting a room in a house, paying partial rent at a public housing unit or in a transitional shelter. Additionally, these cuts in benefits are happening at the same time that health and human service agencies who provide assistance to these individuals are already experiencing cuts in their contracts and are decreasing the amount of services they are able to provide. Agencies may not be able to make up this deficit.

The proposed SD1 will allow DHS to continue to pay \$469/mon for April, May and June and keep GA recipients from becoming homeless.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the proposed HB 1064 HD1 SD1.

Testimony in Support of HB1064 HD1: Proposed SD1
Senate Committee on Human Services
Conference Room 016, 3/24/09, 2:15 p.m.

By Kathleen Hasegawa

Members of the House Committee on Human Services, thank you for proposing to add General Assistance to this measure. My support of funding for General Assistance is both personal and professional. A member of my family was on General Assistance for several years and I know from watching his struggle with mental illness and with alcoholism that General Assistance was a life saver for him. His life has been a great struggle and when he was too ill to work GA provided a way to live. When he was in residential treatment it provided for his room and board. When he moved out of residential treatment it helped him live in a clean and sober environment. When he failed in his efforts and then was ready to pick himself up and try again GA helped him pay for his clean and sober housing until he was able to work enough to meet his expenses.

With the help of many programs, his therapist, his family and most importantly his own firm resolve he has been able for the last year to work and thrive. But you have to understand that there were times when he couldn't make it, times when he despaired and contemplated suicide, times when he was homeless.

For people who are, like he was, ill and in treatment, and unable to make it without a hand from all of us, General Assistance is a life line. It's a very small sum but it is often the only thing that stands between life and death.

If GA is cut for 3 months many recipients will become homelessness with little hope of ever being able to regain stability, treatment and housing. These are the people we will pass on the street and wonder why they became or "chose" to become homeless vagrants to be roused from parks and beaches and libraries and rooftops and doorways just as my family member was until he was able to make it because General Assistance gave him a lifeline.

Thank you for your effort to provide stability for these recipients of GA.

Kathleen Hasegawa, Hawaii Habitat for Humanity Association, 808-538-7676

TESTIMONY IN *SUPPORT* OF HB 1064 HD1, SD1

To: Suzanne Chun-Oakland, Chair and Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

From: Ku'uilei A. Killiona, Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Re: HB 1064 HD1, SD1 (HSCR 786)

Date: Tues., 3/24/09

Time: 2:15 pm

Place: Conf. Rm. 016

Dear Chairs and Committee Members,

I am in support of this measure for all the good that it will bring and for all bad that it will prevent. Thank you for the opportunity to present my view.

Mahalo, Ku'uilei A. Killiona

kuuleikilliona@hawaii.rr.com

The mental health system on Maui is in shambles. There are unreported suicides and attempted suicides on Maui that are due to lack of funding or improper allocation of the funds that are there. You cannot reduce the funding by 85% to 15% for case workers. They are the lifeline for the mentally ill. This is a travesty and must be changed.

Bob Hansen, Realtor Broker
808-283-9456
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www.mauirealestate.net



To: Senate Committee on Human Services
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Vice Chair

Date: March 24, 2009 - Conference Room 016 – 2:15 pm

Re: **HB 1064, HD1: MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO ADDRESS THE BUDGET SHORTFALL**

Chair Chun Oakland and Committee Members:

My name is Barbara Kim Stanton, State Director of AARP Hawaii. AARP is a membership organization of people 50 and older with nearly 160,000 members in Hawaii. We are committed to championing access to affordable, quality health care for all generations, providing the tools needed to save for retirement, and serving as a reliable information source on issues critical to Americans age 50+.

AARP opposes HB 1064, HD1. This bill would appropriate \$60,000,000 from the emergency and budget reserve fund (commonly known as the “Rainy Day Fund”) to replace general funds appropriated in Act 213, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007, as amended by Act 158, Session Laws of Hawaii 2008, for the health care payments program (HMS 401) of the Department of Human services and, thereby, help to address the budget shortfall in fiscal year 2008-2009.

We do not believe that the \$74 million in the rainy day fund should be drained to balance the current year’s budget shortfall. Instead, AARP supports SB 1679 to use these moneys to “maintain levels of programs determined to be essential to public health, safety, welfare and education” during a time of economic downturn. This measure meets the purpose of the rainy day fund as originally intended when it was established by the Legislature in 1999.

While we understand that there is a need to balance the budget, the budget should not be balanced off the backs of seniors, the disabled and others who are the least able to get on their feet. They are taking the hit before other groups to alleviate the state’s economic burden.

We oppose HB 1064, HD1 as a primary vehicle to balance the state budget shortfall, and urge our legislators to appropriately use the emergency rainy day fund to protect this vulnerable population as indicated in SB 1679.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland
Committee on Human Services
Conference Room 016
March 24, 2009
2:15 PM
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii

In Opposition of HB 1064

March 23, 2009

Aloha Senator Chun Oakland:

I am in opposition to any, repeat any, cutting of state General Assistance (GA) Funds for the welfare recipients. These recipients cannot live on such a cut. These state checks are typically \$468.00 per month. If it is cut, in half, that would be only \$234.00 for the whole month!!! That is not enough for them to live on!!!

I understand that times are hard, and I agree that half is better than none, but please try to find the money from someplace else!!! And I am also aware that it will only be for three (3) months.

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



LILLIAN B. KOLLER
DIRECTOR

HENRY OLIVA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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

March 24, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1064, H.D. 1 – MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO ADDRESS THE BUDGET
SHORTFALL**

Hearing: Tuesday, March 24, 2009 2:15 p.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is authorize an emergency appropriation from the Emergency and Budget Reserve Fund to replace general funds appropriated for the health care payments program (HMS 401) to address the budget shortfall in fiscal year 2008-2009.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services defers to the Department of Budget and Finance on this bill.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.