

HB 1098

## **kim4 - Elizabeth**

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**From:** Joel Fischer [jfischer@hawaii.edu]  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 04, 2009 2:33 PM  
**To:** WAM Testimony  
**Subject:** HB1098;WAM;4/6/09;9:30AM;Rm211

**Importance:** High

HB1098,HD2, SD1, Relating to GA  
WAM; Chair, Sen Mercado-Kim

### **PLEASE PASS THIS BILL!**

I have been testifying on GA since 1996 when GA became a block grant, hoping to move it back to an entitlement program. With this bill, my hope for GA clients can come true. Among other provisions, this bill in the first paragraph allows General Assistance to be removed from block grant status to become an entitlement program. This was done, as can be seen in the Finance Committee's report to the Speaker, with full awareness of House leaders who were, at best, lukewarm to changing GA from a block grant.

The importance of this change cannot be overstated. GA clients are subject to more discrimination than any other group of clients. They are cast-away people whom most decision-makers seem not to care about, as witness the horrific cuts in GA from \$469 to \$234 that will occur next month. One of the reasons for these cuts is GA's status as a block grant that is almost impossible to supplement.

This bill can end that discrimination by restoring GA to an entitlement program. I am very happy to trade the 24 month time limit to get GA back to an entitlement program to protect these most vulnerable of our neighbors.

Thank you very much for your advocacy efforts on behalf of GA clients.

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW  
Professor  
University of Hawai'i, School of Social Work  
Henke Hall  
Honolulu, HI 96822

"It is reasonable that everyone who asks justice should DO justice."  
Thomas Jefferson

"There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because one's conscience tells one that it is right."  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Never, never, never quit."  
Winston Churchill



Senate WAM Cmte  
Mon, Apr 6, 2009  
9:30 am  
room 211

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

April 4, 2009

TO: Senator Donna Kim, Chair  
Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee

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

RE: HB 1098 HD2, SD1 Relating to General Assistance- **SUPPORT**

Chair Kim and members of the Senate Ways and Means 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 HB 1098 HD2, SD1.**

The purpose of HB 1098 HD2, SD1 is to change the way the General Assistance (GA) program is funded. Currently the program is funded by a block grant appropriated by the Legislature. The Department has admitted that having GA as a fixed block grant is difficult to maintain when the number of individuals applying for GA is increasing. For the past few years, the amount of the GA block grant has been inadequate to maintain paying all recipients at the \$469/mon level. We applaud the Department for continuing to fund GA recipients at this level despite the inadequate funds in the block grant. The Department has had to "borrow" from the appropriation for the ABD population to maintain giving \$469/mon to GA recipients. To avoid this practice of "borrowing" from the ABD appropriation, we support changing General Assistance into an entitlement program rather than a block grant. HB 1098 HD2, SD1 proposes to do this.

The Financial Assistance Advisory Council has discussed this issue with the DHS and both have agreed to proceed making both programs (ie, ABD and GA) entitlement programs.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.