



## **TESTIMONY OF THE STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE, 2009**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 1496, RELATING TO TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

**DATE:** Thursday, February 5, 2009 **TIME:** 8:15 AM

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 329

**TESTIFIER(S):** Mark J. Bennett, Attorney General  
or James W. Walther, Deputy Attorney General

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Chair Mizuno and Members of the Committee:

This bill is unclear and ambiguous in a way that would affect implementation of the measure if it is passed.

First, the title and section 1 of the bill refer to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a program created by the federal government pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 601-619. In the proposed statutory section, however, there is no reference to TANF other than in the title of the proposed section. The wording of the proposed section does not limit funding of this program to the availability of federal TANF funds. Federal funds could be used if they are available and the use is within one of the allowed TANF purposes established by federal law, but the State may be obligated to provide the benefits using state general funds in the event the federal funds become unavailable in the future, or if the use is determined to be ineligible for federal TANF funding by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. If the intent of the Legislature is to limit the funding to available federal TANF money, it should be stated explicitly in the text of the proposed statutory section.

In addition, the proposed statutory section refers to "temporary" and "permanent" assistance, at page 2, lines 3-4, 14-15. The bill does not define either of those terms, so it is unclear what the meaning is

for each term, or what the difference would be between the two types of assistance. The provision for "permanent" assistance is especially unclear in light of the references in section 1 of the bill to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which by definition is intended to be temporary, and to "nonrecurring special needs," which also implies a non-permanent condition. The bill should be amended to clarify the terms.

I, Matthew Simmons UH School of Social Work, support H. B. 1496.

Committee on Human Services

Thursday February 5, 2009 @ 8:15 am

Inevitable are the hard economic times faced by the majority. And even more prevalent is the gap between rich and poor. As we face these economic crisis' it is important to note that the most affected are the most vulnerable populations that desperately need our help. As we see more and more local businesses such as Aloha Airlines and Molokai Ranch close, the number of foreclosures on houses rise, and inflation remaining strong, it is imperative that we continue to provide necessary aid to the families in our communities that need it. While continuing to provide essential healthcare, education, employment, support programs and economic assistance, we must also be diligent in creating reserves for further economic downturn.

Our communities and families are the backbone of our society and it is our duty to ensure that families have every working opportunity to remain self sufficient and strong. We can achieve this through the further funding of TANF with the realization that cutting back these expenditures in a time when they are needed the most leaves Hawaii's families vulnerable without the emotional and economic stability that ensures families their self-sufficiency.

To further this we must become diligent in supporting the families who experience homelessness, especially by the hands of domestic violence. It is my belief that HB 1496 has the propensity to help build a more comprehensive solution to the domestic violence situation that currently plagues our state. It is my hope that this is a continuation of comprehensive legislation that will address the issue of domestic violence in our state contained by the semblance of collaboration with local, state, private, and federal authorities.

## brower2-Jenna

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**From:** Joel Fischer [redacted]@hawaii.edu  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 03, 2009 8:36 PM  
**To:** HUS testimony  
**Subject:** HB1496; HUS; 2/5/09; 8:15AM; Rm329

**Importance:** High

**Categories:** Red Category

HB1496, Relating to TANF  
HUS; Chair, Rep Mizuno

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

I am very appreciative of your great empathy and caring in creating this bill and for holding this hearing. This bill encompasses two of the biggest social problems of our time: domestic violence and homelessness. Who but the most callous among us could vote against this bill when such devastating circumstances as domestic violence drive women and their families onto the streets or beaches? No one!

I am aware of the tight economic times and the difficulties they pose for our state. But there can scarcely be a more extreme example of vulnerability and need than the people whom this bill will help. This clearly is part of the safety net that we must preserve. We absolutely cannot ignore these people, no matter how large or small in numbers they may be. It is also clear to me as, a member of the DHS Financial Assistance Advisory Committee, that Federal regulations allow TANF money to be spent for these purposes.

So, thank you once again for this bill. You have done the entire community a major service by showing how much you care.

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW  
President, 19-3, Democratic Party

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"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.