

HB 658, HD1

Measure Title:

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE MAUI OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES

Report Title:

Maui Office of Veterans' Services; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds for one veterans' counselor position for the Maui office of the office of veterans' services. Takes effect July 1, 2020. (HB658 HD1)

STATE OF HAWAII
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES
TESTIMONY ON H.B. 658, HD1, RELATING TO MAKING AN APPROPRIATION
FOR THE MAUI OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

March 24, 2009

Good afternoon Chair Will Espero, Vice-Chair Robert Bunda, and members of the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs.

I am Mark Moses, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). We appreciate this opportunity to comment on H.B. 658, HD1, which seeks to appropriate funds to establish one additional full-time counselor position at the Maui OVS.

The OVS understands that there is a need to employ additional counselors to serve veterans and their families; nevertheless, we ask that I as director be allowed to determine the staffing levels and placements that best serve all veterans. Given our current economic circumstances, it may not be practical to implement this measure at this time. It most definitely is a matter worthy of consideration when the state's fiscal situation improves.

I wish to share background information on what has occurred in the past. The Maui OVS was responsible for making itinerant visits to Molokai and Lanai. Suddenly, the Maui Veterans Services Counselor applied for retirement and the OVS requested to refill the position. However, as the Maui Counselor position is technically still filled by the individual seeking retirement, the OVS was required to establish an identical position, which we accomplished.

After some delay, we were **able to employ an individual** as a "temporary appointment outside of the list" to provide counseling services to Maui veterans and their family members. Additionally, as requested and granted by the Legislature, the OVS created and filled a roving counselor position that visits Molokai two times a month and Lanai once a month.

The OVS will hire a permanent counselor once the previous position holder's retirement issues are resolved. Unfortunately, during the time period between the hiring for the above mentioned counselor positions, the Maui Office Assistant, filed for and was granted retirement. We have subsequently hired a replacement under a personal service contract.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Hawaii's veteran community. I will respond to questions from the committee.