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March 23, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **S.B. 905, S.D. 2, H.D.1 – RELATING TO THE OFFICE OF
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Hearing: Monday, March 23, 2009; 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: This purpose of S.B. 905, S.D. 2, H.D. 1 is to transfer the Office of Community Services from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to the Department of Human Services.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this Administration-sponsored bill. The transfer of the Office of Community Services (OCS) from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) to the Department of Human Services (DHS) will strengthen and improve the delivery of human services programs.

We believe that the primary functions of OCS more readily correspond to the mission, objectives and responsibilities of DHS, which is to provide timely, efficient and effective programs, services, and benefits, for the purpose of achieving the outcome of empowering those who are the most vulnerable in our State to expand their capacity for

self-sufficiency, self-determination, independence, healthy choices, quality of life and personal dignity.

DHS is the appropriate placement for OCS and since they offer programs that give low-income persons, disadvantage persons, refugees, immigrants, and homeless individuals the tools to attain self-sufficiency, such as employment and job training, child care, and general assistance. Accordingly, leaving the employment core services and employment creation programs for low-income individuals, immigrants, and refugees in the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations is inconsistent with the intent of this bill which was to transfer OCS to DHS to improve the delivery of such services to these vulnerable populations.

The realignment proposed in this bill will improve the Department of Human Services' coordination and delivery of services to both singles and families. We respectfully recommend that the employment core services and the employment creation services for low-income individuals, immigrants, and refugees remain with OCS when it is transferred to DHS.

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



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Testimony of the Office of Community Services

Good Morning Chair Mizuno, Vice Chair Brower and members of the committee,

My name is Sam Aiona and I am testifying as the Executive Director of the Office of the Community Services in support of SB 905, SD2, HD1, with a few suggested amendments. As you know, the Office of Community Services currently administers over seventy contracts in eighteen program areas to ensure the self-sufficiency of low-income persons, refugees, and immigrants.

OCS was created in part to consolidate a number of programs that deal with economic and personal self-sufficiency, as well as community building. At the time of our establishment, the chief indicator of self-sufficiency was the attainment and maintenance of employment. Our focus then was on programs that trained and readied people for employment, our so-called "Employment Core" services. The definition of "Employment Core" fit well with the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, to which we became administratively attached. Given our flexibility as an attached agency and our broad mission statement, over time OCS acquired and developed supportive services and programs linked to Employment Core services, and appropriately to the low-income, immigrant and refugee population. As the Office's identity emerged, employment training became a component in a more holistic approach to self-sufficiency.

The previous committee has voiced a concern that perhaps Employment Related programs should remain in the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. We respectfully disagree that these services should be separated. As part of a holistic approach to serving Low-income Persons, Refugees, and Immigrants, the Administration some years ago attempted to create a "bundle" of services that would assist this clientele from start to finish. As we have stated testifying on other bills related to this subject, our "bundle" has grown to encompass many major barriers. Though it is true Employment programs are the purview of the DLIR, splitting this specialized facet of Employment programming would actually create more work than the structure currently in place. For example, most of the clientele referred to the low-income aspect of Employment Programs would be referred back to OCS to alleviate their coincident barriers. This would create more bureaucracy and increased frustration on the part of the client.

The purpose of this initiative is, in fact, to consolidate programs for the ease of the public. Rather than forcing our clientele to chase a number of services throughout the current administrative structure, we believe we can serve them better by providing a number of services tailored to their specific challenges. A move to DHS would provide us additional referral

capacity over a broad range of services that these populations typically experience as well as consolidate and reduce administrative process.

OCS appreciates and is indebted to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and its administrators for the benefits our office has enjoyed. Nevertheless, increasingly complex global issues, immigrants from new corners of the world, and complicated regulatory frameworks compound the challenges to our clientele. Our move to DHS will allow our Department to expand its capacity to meet each and every one of our client's challenges in a comprehensive manner. The previous incarnation of this bill more closely aligns with the Administration's efforts to streamline and reorganize current governmental structure to best serve our clients. We respectfully ask that your committee amend this bill to reflect the changes made by the Senate in the SD2 version. I thank you for your time and am available to answer any questions you may have.



To: COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Tom Brower, Vice Chair

From: Tammie Smith Visperas, Program Administrator, 543-8425
Jennifer Vosberg, Program Director
Child & Family Service

Re: Senate Bill 905, SD 2, HD 1 Relating to the Office of Community Services

Child & Family Service (CFS) is non-profit social service agency providing critical services to children, the elderly and families in need for the past 110 years. One of the major programs are the Employment Core Services for Immigrants Program and the Employment Creation for Low-Income Persons, Immigrants and Refugee Program.

CFS is also a member of the Inter-Agency Council, which has representation from many health and social service providers throughout the state. The purpose of the Inter-Agency Council is to work together to advocate for the needs of immigrants.

In accordance with the position of the Inter-Agency Council, Child & Family strongly supports the transfer of the Office of Community Services (OCS) from the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) to the Department of Human Services (DHS) in its entirety.

Child & Family Service fully supports restoring the Employment Core Service for Low-Income Persons, Employment Core Services for Immigrants and Employment Creation for Low-Income Persons, Immigrants and Refugee Programs to OCS. These comprehensive programs provide one-on-one, group and individual support not only for employment, but for family stability and self-sufficiency. These programs provide English Language and acculturation training, assistance with building formal and informal support systems, transportation services, referral services and assistance with creating long-term goals for individuals and families to be successful and contributing members of the community.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TO: Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Tom Brower, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services

FROM: Melba Bantay, Program Director

DATE: Monday, March 23, 2009 (8:30 a.m., Room 329)

RE: **SB 905, SD2, HD1, Relating to the Office of Community Services**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB905, SD2, HD1, Relating to the Office of Community Services. I am Melba Bantay, Program Director of Immigrant Services at Catholic Charities Hawaii.

Catholic Charities Hawaii is a private, 501 (c)(3) organization that has been providing services for immigrants since 1980. The Agency has two contracts with the Office of Community Services (OCS) to provide Employment Core Services for immigrants on the islands of Oahu and Hawai'i. CH is also a member of the Inter Agency Council, which is a group of over a dozen government and private organizations working together to advocate for the needs of immigrants.

- **Catholic Charities Hawai'i does not support the current proposal to transfer OCS from DLIR to DHS without its current employment-related programs.**
- **Catholic Charities Hawai'i does support the original proposal to transfer OCS from DLIR to DHS with all existing programs intact, including employment-related programs.**

All of the current programs of OCS focus on low income, immigrant and refugee populations, whether those programs are employment focused or not. Employment preparation and employment creation programs are part of a range of social service services geared to helping individuals and families develop the skills toward self sufficiency.

As a provider of Employment Core Services, CCH understands the rationale and potential benefits to the State of consolidating similar social services programs under one department. Therefore, transferring OCS and **all** of its existing programs from DLIR to DHS has some logic.

However, the current proposal to transfer OCS to DHS while retaining employment core and employment creation programs for low income, immigrant and refugee populations in DLIR is detrimental to a strong, seamless provision of services for these populations. As an advocate for low income, immigrant and refugee populations, CCH does not support this current proposal.

If a transfer of OCS from DLIR to DHS is made, we respectfully request that the **following concerns be noted:**

- 1) **That any transfer of OCS from DLIR to DHS include all existing programs, including employment core and employment creation programs for low income, immigrants and refugees.**
- 2) That the transfer not affect the ability of OCS to maintain their pattern of efficient and timely payment to services providers;
- 3) That the transfer not result in any cuts to immigrant program funding nor attempts to have services for immigrants absorbed into low income persons programs.
- 4) That the concept of self-sufficiency will continue to include job creation as well as regular employment programs; and
- 5) That the OCS milestone payment system will be operated on realistic milestone objectives.

If additional information is needed, please feel free to contact me via phone at 528-5233 or via email at mbantay@catholiccharitieshawaii.org. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.