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S.B. NO. 214

A Bill for an Act Relating to Workforce Development.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii attracts migrating citizens from the Freely Associated States (FAS)—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau—who seek education, health, and economic advancement for themselves and their families.

In the past few years a growing number of FAS students have been enrolling in Hawaii's public schools. These students face numerous challenges due to cultural differences, including language barriers. Certain areas of Oahu have experienced significant increases in their FAS citizen populations, particularly Waipahu, Kalihi, and the area of the Downtown-Lunalilo corridor. At Waipahu elementary school, the English as a second language (ESL) program comprises over forty per cent of the school's total student population—one of the largest ESL programs in the Leeward district. In the past three years, Marshallese students in the program have increased from twenty to one hundred and eleven, and Chuukese students, from zero to fifty-two.

These students and their families lack both the language skills and the cultural awareness necessary to adapt to, let alone excel in, their new environment. However, the State is currently ill-equipped to facilitate their assimilation into our community. The legislature finds that it is incumbent upon the community to assist these FAS citizens and decrease the likelihood that they will need to rely upon public assistance in the future. Providing FAS communities with a coordinated, culturally coherent support system that addresses education, health, and employment training, is vital to the development of an educated and productive workforce within these communities.

Assisting these communities is challenging in that, due to cultural differences and a lack of cultural awareness, members of the FAS communities are often unwilling to immediately trust and accept services from individuals and organizations within the larger community. Tapping into existing organizations with established relationships with the FAS communities, or existing methods or approaches for successfully serving the FAS communities is essential to also effectively assimilate, educate, and prepare FAS community members for gainful employment within the State.

The legislature finds that the University of Hawaii, including the community college system, is dedicated to the betterment of all the diverse ethnic populations in Hawaii. As part of the community college system, Leeward community college is sensitive to cultural awareness and education and is also dedicated to offering quality workforce programs. As such, Leeward community college is an ideal candidate for shepherding a workforce program to provide comprehensive services to the FAS communities.

SECTION 2. The purpose of this Act is to authorize Leeward community college to develop a program to provide services to FAS students as well as to the Micronesian, Marshallese, and Palauan communities at large, to ensure their success in school through cultural education and integration, language, employment, training, and legal services, that may include but are not limited to services to:

- (1) Ensure that students from the FAS are equipped with the necessary tools and skills to achieve success in school;
- (2) Develop a comprehensive multidisciplinary community-based family support system for immigrants from the FAS;
- (3) Address issues of cultural transition, through the promotion of cultural coherence and self-identification;
- (4) Provide employment and training instruction to assist with job readiness, job placement, and job retention, which shall include but not be limited to:
 - (A) Basic educational skills training;
 - (B) Occupational skills training;
 - (C) English as a second language training; and
 - (D) Mentoring;

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- (5) Provide training for professional service providers that takes a holistic approach, includes problem solving, and increases awareness of and sensitivity to cultures within the FAS; and
- (6) Collect and disseminate information regarding successful methods of serving FAS immigrants in the form of written documentation, oral or video presentations, or any other appropriate medium.

The office of continuing education at Leeward community college shall oversee and administer the program through the provision of grants to community-based service providers. In administering the grants, the office of continuing education shall require as a condition to participation in the grant application process that organizations demonstrate documented prior experience and a successful track record in serving the Micronesian, Marshallese, and Palauan communities.

SECTION 3. Leeward community college shall not use general funds otherwise allocated to Leeward community college, but shall restrict the funding of the program to private contributions and federal funding sought solely for the purposes of this Act. Leeward community college may accept grants, services, and property from the federal government, foundations, private and public organizations, and any other persons or entities as may be available for fulfilling the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 4. Leeward community college shall submit a report to the legislature on the status of the development of the program, including any efforts to secure funding for the program, not less than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2005.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Became law on July 13, 2004, without the Governor's signature, pursuant to Art III, §16, State Constitution.)