

ACT 82

H.B. NO. 2770

A Bill for an Act Relating to Bridge to Hope Program.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the recent changes to the rules of the federal temporary assistance for needy families program, which prohibit baccalaureate education as countable work activities and limit educational activities to one year of vocational education are not consistent with the State's intention to include education and training as one of the pathways to economic self-sufficiency. Although the department of human services has implemented an expanded education policy for first to work participants, Act 276, Session Laws of Hawaii 2000, which amended chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to create the bridge to hope education program, applies only to temporary assistance for needy families. Currently, temporary assistance to other needy families participants use the expanded education options due to the recent federal limitations on educational activities.

Since its enactment of the bridge to hope post-secondary education benefits program within the department of human services in July of 2000, the legislature has affirmed the State's support for access to post-secondary education by participants in the federally funded temporary assistance for needy families welfare program. Heads of households often require additional skills and knowledge to increase their earning capacity to enable them to earn a self-sufficient wage. Since July 2001, the bridge to hope student employment and academic support program at the University of Hawaii has served over six hundred individuals with one hundred fifty of those individuals earning their associate of arts degrees and seventy others earning their bachelor of arts degrees.

The purpose of this Act is to clarify eligibility requirements of and expand the bridge to hope program to enable all heads of households who are receiving financial assistance and participating in the first to work program to pursue a full range of educational activities as part of their work activities.

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SECTION 2. Section 346-68, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsections (a) and (b) to read as follows:

“(a) There is created within the department a post-secondary education benefits program, to be known as the bridge to hope program, for heads of households in the ~~[temporary assistance to needy families]~~ first to work program.

(b) To receive assistance under this program, the ~~[single-parent]~~ participant shall:

- (1) Be enrolled as a student each term[;] in an approved course of study including, but not limited to, vocational education;
- (2) Maintain passing grades or better throughout the course of study; and
- (3) Meet work activity requirements as defined by the department.”

SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved May 20, 2008.)