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H.B. NO. 2547

A Bill for an Act Making an Emergency Appropriation to the Department of Human Services.

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

SECTION 1. This Act is recommended by the governor for immediate passage in accordance with section 9 of article VII of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii.

SECTION 2. A critical funding emergency exists. The general assistance program (HMS 204) will expend all appropriated funds before the end of the current fiscal year 2011-2012. Pursuant to section 346-53(b), Hawaii Revised Statutes, the general assistance program is a block grant program; the maximum allowance a general assistance recipient may receive is determined by dividing the amount of the appropriation by the number of general assistance recipients.

Due to increasing general assistance caseloads, the department reduced monthly general assistance payments in October 2011 from \$344 to \$319 a month. Caseloads continue to rise and the department is unable to maintain the current maximum \$319 per month general assistance payment benefit to approximately 5,584 disabled recipients for the duration of the funding year. In the absence of an emergency appropriation, general assistance payments will be reduced to \$268 a month in March 2012. This amount is not enough to cover living and housing expenses for individuals who have no other viable means of support.

Stopping the grant payment or reducing the amount of the grant payment for these individuals poses a real threat to the individuals' health and safety

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and is likely to result in increased homelessness. To avoid further reductions of general assistance payments, additional funds are urgently needed.

SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$736,478 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2011-2012 to be used for general assistance payments (HMS 204).

SECTION 4. The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of human services for the purposes of this Act.

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

(Approved April 20, 2012.)