

HB 1064



Senate WAM Cmte
Mon, Apr 6, 2009
9:30 am
room 211

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

April 4, 2009

TO: Senator Donna Kim, Chair
Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Debbie Shimizu, LSW
National Association of Social Workers, Hawaii Chapter

RE: HB 1064, HD1, SD1 Making an Emergency Appropriation for the Department of Human Services to Address the Budget Shortfall- **SUPPORT**

Chair Kim and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, I am Debbie Shimizu, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Hawaii Chapter. I am also a member of the Financial Assistance Advisory Council (FAAC) of DHS. NASW is the largest professional organization for social workers in Hawaii.

NASW supports HB 1064, HD1, SD1.

The purpose of HB 1064, HD1, SD1 is to change the way the General Assistance (GA) program is funded. Currently the program is funded by a block grant appropriated by the Legislature. The Department has admitted that having GA as a fixed block grant is difficult to maintain when the number of individuals applying for GA is increasing. For the past few years, the amount of the GA block grant has been inadequate to maintain paying all recipients at the \$469/mon level. We applaud the Department for continuing to fund GA recipients at this level despite the inadequate funds in the block grant. The Department has had to "borrow" from the appropriation for the ABD population to maintain giving \$469/mon to GA recipients. To avoid this practice of "borrowing" from the ABD appropriation, we support the amendments proposed by Legal Aid Society of Hawaii to change General Assistance into an entitlement program rather than a block grant.

The Financial Assistance Advisory Council has discussed this issue with the DHS and both have agreed to proceed making both programs (ie, ABD and GA) entitlement programs.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

kim4 - Elizabeth

From: Joel Fischer [jfischer@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Saturday, April 04, 2009 2:30 PM
To: WAM Testimony
Subject: HB1064;WAM;4/6/09;9:30AM;Rm211

Importance: High

HB1064, HD1,SD1,Mmaking an EA for GA and Mental Health Services
WAM; Chair, Sen Mercado-Kim

IN STRONG SUPPORT!!!

Thank you very much for hearing this bill. It is absolutely crucial that we keep GA cash benefits from sinking to \$234 per month! Can you imagine how cruel and barbaric that would be. Whether it is through an emergency appropriation or use of the Rainy Day fund, we MUST not allow so many disabled people slip through the cracks. I urge passage of this bill.

Similarly, we cannot allow our mental health services to fall so far below all standards of humane care. To not provide adequate care simply invites another federal lawsuit.

Thank you for supporting this EA!

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW
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"It is reasonable that everyone who asks justice should DO justice."
Thomas Jefferson

"There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because one's conscience tells one that it is right."
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Never, never, never quit."
Winston Churchill