



Senate HMS Cmte
Thurs, Feb 12, 2009
1:45 pm
room 016

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

February 9, 2009

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland
Members of the Senate Human Services Committee

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

RE: SB 1330 Relating to General Assistance- **SUPPORT INTENT**

Chair Chun Oakland and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Debbie Shimizu, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Hawaii Chapter. I am also a member of the Welfare and Employment Rights Coalition (WERC) and the Financial Assistance Advisory Council (FAAC) of DHS. NASW is the largest professional organization for social workers in Hawaii.

NASW supports the intent of SB 1330 but recommends that it be consistent with amendments proposed to SB 916.

The language on page 8, lines 1-3 is erroneous because General Assistance (GA) is a totally state funded program and not subject to "maximum length of time permissible under federal law".

I believe the original intent of this legislation was to limit the amount the state could decrease funding for GA recipients. We would appreciate adding language to SB 916 that would limit the amount DHS could decrease the GA benefit to not more than 10% in a biennium.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

SB1330, Relating to GA
HMS; Chair, Sen Chun-Oakland

PLEASE PASS THIS BILL WITH AMENDMENTS!

Thank you very much for introducing this bill and holding this hearing.

This bill was conceived at a time when DHS actually had notified clients that GA amounts were going to drop from approximately \$469/month to about \$189/month. This is absolutely intolerable.

I understand that DHS was forced into this position because of a lack of funds. But DHS failed in their statutory responsibility to consult with community advocates who are members of the Financial Advosroy Assistance Committee (FAAC). Furthermore, DHS failed to release information about any of their changes to cash assistance programs to FAAC members despite repeated requests. I was forced to request an investigation by OIP to require DHS to release information to its own committee! This is intolerable and possibly illegal.

Therefore, though some circumstances have changed since this bill was proposed, I ask that it still be approved in the event that it must be used as a vehicle to address these issues in a later committee.

I would like to request the following amendments:

- 1. The 10% maximum reduction should be for the BIENNIMUM.**
- 2. The maximum period of time on GA should be changed to 2 years or the maximum be removed all together.**
- 3. As provided by law in the statute creating FAAC (346-14.5,c.), I ask that the bill be amended to include a mandated professional mediation led by a professional facilitator at the expense of DHS to ensure that DHS, its Director and FAAC members reach an understanding and agreement about the importance of timely meetings and information release. This mediation should occur with one month of passage of this bill.**

Thank you very much for considering these amendments.

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW
Professor
University of Hawai'i, School of Social Work
Henke Hall
Honolulu, HI 96822

Testimony for SB1330

Camille Rockett, Masters of Social Work Student, UH Manoa

Before the House Committee on Hawaiian Affairs

Wednesday, February 11, 2009

PLEASE PASS THIS BILL!

I am writing to support the passage of SB1330, to prevent cuts in GA benefits.

I am a Master's student in the School of Social Work at UH Manoa, a born and raised Hawaii resident, and a mother.

I have worked in the field with persons who receive GA benefits, and I can say first hand that cutting their income or shortening the length of their benefits will have disastrous effects. The meager assistance they receive hardly cover their living expenses, and most often they can only pay their rent in dilapidated studio apartments and don't have enough for other expenses. Cutting even further their monthly allowance will only create more problems as the state has no infrastructure for caring for these individuals should they be evicted from housing or unable to afford to care for themselves.

The main issue here is the state wants to cut funds from our poor and needy brothers and sisters while allowing the rich residents of Hawaii to continue to relax in their comfortable lifestyles. Taking money from people who have none and are not able to access the same opportunities as the rich, healthy, and advantaged is simply immoral. At the same time, providing continued support to a population that is unable to "fit in" to our economic structure on their own will prevent larger costs to our state in the future.

Please realize that cutting GA benefits will harm real people and real families who are already struggling and facing difficulty in day to day life. Slashing aid to this part of our community sends the message to our keiki that it is ok to treat people who have disabilities with disrespect. It is not ok to punish people for things they have little control over, like mental illness or disability. It is not ok to say that these people are less deserving of living a full and happy life.

I strongly support this bill, and plead that you will pass SB1330.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 12, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **S. B. 1330 - RELATING TO GENERAL ASSISTANCE**
Hearing: Thursday, February 12, 2009, 1:45 p.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The proposed amendment is to protect recipients of General Assistance from having their benefits reduced by more than ten percent by appropriating additional funds in the event General Assistance appropriation runs out for fiscal year 2009-2010. This measure also requires the Department of Human Services to allow individuals to receive General Assistance benefits for the maximum amount of time permissible under federal law.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services appreciates the intent of this measure; however, appropriating additional State general funds would be problematic given the current fiscal difficulties, and it would not be prudent to pursue enactment at this time.

Regarding allowance of General Assistance for the maximum amount of time permissible under federal law; there is no federal law specifying a maximum amount of permissible time to receive General Assistance, which is an all State-funded program.

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

FAX-1-800-587-6657 OR (808) 551-1111
TESTIMONY - THE SENATE - 25TH LEGISLATURE

REGULAR SESSION OF 2009 2/12/09 1:45 PM
CONF. RM. 016 STATE CAPITOL 415 BERETANIA ST
HONOLULU, HI TRUCE END

NAME: MARGARET LEVY-DORANDS, CNA

POSITION: BOARD MEMBER

ORGANIZATION: STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

DATE: 2/12/09

TIME: 1:45 PM

COMMITTEE DIRECTION: COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
SEN. CHUN OAKLAND, SEN. IHARA

1. MEASURE # SB 1210 - I AM AGAIN THIS MEASURE

2 " " SB 1189 - "

3 " " SB 915 - "

4 " " SB 918 - "

5 " " SB 1330 - "

6 " " SB 924 - "

7 " " SB 1177 - "

8 " " SB 913 - "

9 " " SB 916 - "

I AM FOR THE FOLLOWING MEASURES

10. MEASURE # SB 1016 - I AM FOR THIS MEASURE

11. " " SB 133 - "

12. " " SB 801 - "

13 " " SB 1006 - "

14 " " SB 1014 - "

THANK YOU

MARGARET LEVY-DORANDS, CNA

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