
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. Section 346-53, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

"(b) The director, shall determine the allowance for general assistance to households without minor dependents based upon the total amount appropriated for general assistance to households with minor dependents, and other funds appropriated to the department of human services, among other relevant factors."

SECTION 2. Section 346-71, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (e) to read as follows:

"(e) Within the limitations of this section, the department shall by rules adopted pursuant to chapter 91, determine:

- (1) The allowance for general assistance to households without minor dependents pursuant to section 346-53(b); [~~based upon the total amount appropriated for general assistance to households without minor dependents;~~]"

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 Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken.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.

Report Title:

General Assistance

Description:

Allows DHS to draw from other funds appropriated to DHS in the event the General Assistance appropriation is insufficient to meet General Assistance benefits payments. (HB1905 HD2)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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February 13, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1905, Proposed H.D. 2 - RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES**

Hearing: Monday, February 13, 2012, 10:30 a.m.
Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to allow the Department of Human Services (DHS) to draw from other funds appropriated to DHS in the event the General Assistance (HMS 204) appropriation is insufficient to meet General Assistance benefits payments.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) strongly supports the proposed H.D. 2 of this bill.

The general assistance program (HMS 204), pursuant to section 346-53(b), Hawaii Revised Statutes, 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. The DHS must adjust GA payments to remain within the GA appropriation when the caseload increases or decreases.

For fiscal year 2012, the payment level began at \$353, but due to caseload increases the benefit payment amount was reduced to \$319 in October 2011 and must be reduced further to \$275 in April 2012 to remain within the authorized appropriation. In prior years, payment had been reduced to as low as \$234 as caseloads increased. These reductions and fluctuations provide no stability to households who already live below poverty levels. Stopping the benefit payment or reducing the amount of the benefit payment for these individuals poses a real threat to the individuals' health and safety. It is also almost certain to trigger increased homelessness.

The DHS has requested an emergency appropriation for the current fiscal year to maintain the benefit amount at \$319 per month. To reduce the future need to request emergency appropriations for the GA program, the Department proposes to utilize, when needed, savings from other programs. This bill would allow the DHS to use savings in other programs of the Department to fund the shortfalls in the GA program due to caseload fluctuations.

The Department of Human Services sincerely appreciates the assistance of the Chair, Co-Chair and members of the House Human Services Committee for providing and scheduling this proposed bill for the general assistance program.

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