SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

ENCOURAGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES MED-QUEST DIVISION TO IMPLEMENT AN INCOME DISREGARD PROGRAM FOR WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES.

WHEREAS, although some individuals may live with significant disabilities and severe health conditions that preclude employment, millions of individuals with disabilities can and do work; and

WHEREAS, although considerable progress has been made over the past several decades to remove barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities, additional challenges remain for individuals with disabilities who wish to remain in the workforce; and

WHEREAS, individuals with disabilities face higher rates of unemployment and poverty than individuals without disabilities; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2015, 17.5 percent of persons with a disability were employed, compared to 65 percent of persons without a disability; and

WHEREAS, furthermore, the unemployment rate for persons with a disability was estimated at 10.7 percent in 2015, compared to 5.1 percent for persons without a disability; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, 28.2 percent of working age individuals with a disability lived in poverty, compared to a poverty rate of 13 percent for working age individuals without a disability; and

WHEREAS, although working age adults with disabilities need adequate health insurance to enter or remain in the work force, their health insurance options may be limited; and
WHEREAS, to retain Medicaid coverage, workers with disabilities often must limit their income and assets to poverty levels; and

WHEREAS, individuals with disabilities possess the skills and talent to support themselves through meaningful employment and make important contributions within the nation's workplaces; however, additional progress must be made to promote the employment of persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, establishing an income disregard program in the Med-QUEST Division of the Department of Human Services would allow Medicaid recipients with disabilities to earn more than would otherwise be possible, while still retaining the Medicaid coverage and services these individuals need to successfully live in the community; and

WHEREAS, an income disregard program for persons with disabilities would also enable individuals with disabilities to seek or maintain gainful employment and enjoy more fulfilling, productive lives; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2017, the House of Representatives concurring, that the Med-QUEST Division of the Department of Human Services is encouraged to implement an income disregard program that will enable workers with disabilities to seek or maintain employment, while also retaining necessary Medicaid benefits and supports; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Director of Human Services and Administrator of the Med-QUEST Division, Department of Human Services.