

JAN 25 2006

A BILL FOR AN ACT

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLEARINGHOUSE
AND LEGAL HOTLINE.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that domestic violence is
2 a serious and escalating problem that affects the health and
3 well-being of Hawaii's families. Enabling victims and their
4 children to gain access to intervention is critical in domestic
5 violence situations.

6 The Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline
7 (DVCLH) is a not-for-profit agency that provides intervention
8 and direct legal services to victims of domestic violence.
9 Unfortunately, the incidences of domestic violence are growing.
10 As a result, DVCLH has become overburdened and forced to put
11 victims of domestic violence on a "wait-list" for intervention
12 services.

13 DVCLH has not seen a measurable increase in funding to
14 support agency staffing, expand program capacity, or strengthen
15 infrastructure in nine years. Pay grades have been modified to
16 achieve a competitive posture, but the current budget cannot
17 accommodate adequate adjustments for staff compensation.



1 Sustainability, retention of skilled staff, and program services
2 are an important focus for the agency at this time. DVCLH is
3 the only organization with its dedicated focus, array of
4 programs, and unique role in bringing peace to island families.

5 Over the last five years, staff have had telephone contact
6 with more than 100,000 individuals, 7,000 safety plans have been
7 completed, 8,000 risk assessments conducted, 53 public schools
8 visited, 2,500 accompaniments made with survivors to relevant
9 community agencies, and 2,305 complex legal cases opened.

10 The legislature further finds that the needs of survivors
11 are more complex today than fifteen years ago. The number of
12 court appearances required by the courts have increased. There
13 are more agencies involved in the life of the families that
14 DVCLH services. The cost of living has increased, education is
15 more expensive, and retaliation by abusers is more serious. All
16 of this impacts the lives of domestic violence victims.

17 The legislature further finds that the unique services
18 offered and the nature of DVCLH work is like no other in the
19 legal profession. The demands on extraordinarily committed but
20 relatively young attorneys are unrelenting. The agency provides
21 extensive training to ensure that its legal services are victim-
22 centered and of the highest possible quality. Noticeably, and



1 unfortunately, legal cases have become increasingly more
2 complex, contentious and costly. The demand for services
3 continues and remains extremely difficult to meet. The agency's
4 ability to compete with other employers to recruit, and more
5 importantly retain, qualified attorneys and paralegals willing
6 and able to provide the specialized services needed by
7 survivors, has become crippled. The salaries paid to the
8 agency's legal staff are lower than any other public agency in
9 the city & county of Honolulu and are frequently half of what is
10 paid in the private sector.

11 The State's budget surplus is an opportunity for an
12 investment to be made in critical services that our community
13 needs. Public support and community investment in an agency
14 such as DVCLH is essential. Additional resources will reduce
15 the burdens, raise the capacity, and enhance the overall success
16 of DVCLH in Hawaii. Without additional resources, the costs to
17 the State will continue to grow as the violence in families
18 destroys lives and impacts the next generation.

19 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for two
20 additional attorney positions and two additional paralegal
21 positions with the Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal
22 Hotline.



SB. NO. 3267

Report Title:

Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline; Legal

Description:

Establishes funding for two additional attorney positions and two additional paralegal positions with the Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline. Makes an appropriation.

