

Honolulu, Hawaii

Feb 16, 2006

RE: H.B. No. 2558

Honorable Calvin K.Y. Say
Speaker, House of Representatives
Twenty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2006
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Labor & Public Employment, to which was referred H.B. No. 2558 entitled:

"A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION,"

begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose of this bill is to encourage employees who have suffered work-related injuries to return to work by allowing an employee who has been deemed unable to return to the employee's original position due to a work injury to be referred by the Director of Labor and Public Employment (Director) for vocational rehabilitation services.

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO, ILWU Local 142, Hawaii State Teachers Association, and a concerned individual supported this bill. The Hawaii Rehabilitation Counseling Association opposed this bill. The Department of Human Resources Development and the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations submitted comments.

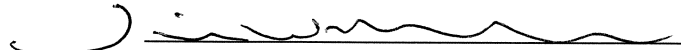
Your Committee notes that existing laws allow employees who have suffered a permanent disability as a result of work injuries to be referred by the Director for vocational rehabilitation services. This bill affords the same access to vocational rehabilitation services to an employee who may not have suffered a permanent disability, but has been otherwise deemed unable to return to the employee's position as a result of a work injury.



Your Committee believes that limiting the Director's referrals for vocational rehabilitation to employees who have suffered a permanent disability is artificially restrictive. The recuperative process following a work injury should not only include healing from the physical effects of the injury itself, but also assisting the injured worker to reintegrate into the workforce in a timely manner.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Labor & Public Employment that is attached to this report, your Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of H.B. No. 2558 and recommends that it pass Second Reading and be referred to the Committee on Finance.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Labor & Public
Employment,



KIRK CALDWELL, Chair



