
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that recent changes to
2 the federal temporary assistance to needy families program rules
3 prohibiting baccalaureate education as countable work activities
4 and limiting educational activities to one year of vocational
5 education are not consistent with the State's desire to include
6 education and training as one of the pathways to economic self-
7 sufficiency. The department of human services implemented an
8 expanded education policy for first-to-work participants but the
9 statute creating the bridge to hope education program only
10 mentions the Temporary Assistance and Needy Families Program
11 participants while Temporary Assistance to Other Needy Families
12 participants now utilize the expanded education options (because
13 of the federal limitations on educational activities).

14 The federal Interim Final Rule for the Reauthorization of
15 the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (45 CFR Part
16 261, June 29, 2006), provides in pertinent part:



1 "Vocational educational training (not to exceed 12
2 months with respect to any individual) means organized
3 educational programs that are directly related to the
4 preparation of individuals for employment in current or
5 emerging occupations requiring training *other than a*
6 *baccalaureate or advanced degree.*" (Emphasis added.)
7 The effect of the new federal regulation is that vocational
8 education training for the Temporary Assistance to Needy
9 Families Program recipients excludes post-secondary education
10 that would permit an individual to earn a bachelor's or advanced
11 degree. The legislature finds that excluding the pursuit of a
12 bachelor or advanced degree as counting toward vocational
13 educational training is contrary to Hawaii's desire to include
14 education as well as training as one of the pathways to economic
15 self-sufficiency, and ultimately economic growth.

16 Since July 2001, the University of Hawaii's bridge to hope
17 student employment and academic program has served over six
18 hundred individuals under the Temporary Assistance to Needy
19 Families Program, with one hundred fifty earning an associate of
20 arts degree and seventy earning an associate of arts degree.
21 These students are heads of households in the Temporary
22 Assistance and Needy Families Program.



1 The State's bridge hope program was enacted by Act 276,
2 Session Laws of Hawaii 2000, which states, in pertinent part, in
3 section 1:

4 "The vast majority of public assistance recipients
5 share the community values of parental responsibility and
6 work ethic, and will accept financial responsibility for
7 themselves and their children when given a real opportunity
8 to achieve self-sufficiency. However, many barriers to
9 work frustrate the best efforts of public assistance
10 recipients to join the work force on a permanent basis.
11 Moreover, strong competition for scarce jobs often leaves
12 behind those with little experience or education.

13 Over ninety per cent of assistance households are
14 currently headed by women. Since approximately two-thirds
15 of all women in Hawaii are working in sales, clerical, and
16 service type jobs, which receive the lowest wages, it is
17 unlikely that the majority of assistance households will be
18 able to move out of poverty and be self-sufficient without
19 adding to their knowledge and skills to increase their
20 earning capacity.

21 Toward that end, the legislature finds that
22 transitional benefits are needed to provide the necessary



1 support to enable recipients to secure education and
2 training beyond high school.

3 The purpose of this Act is to support the successful
4 transition from public assistance to self-sufficiency
5 through a transitional benefits program for public
6 assistance recipients.

7 It is the intent of this Act to encourage the
8 department of human services, through the financial
9 assistance advisory committee, to work in collaboration
10 with the University of Hawaii to establish policies that
11 encourage the pursuit and successful completion of higher
12 education for single parents and their children to achieve
13 a stable future."

14 The legislature finds that existing law needs to be
15 clarified to preserve the intent of Act 276, Session Laws of
16 Hawaii 2000, and to simultaneously comply with federal law.

17 The purpose of this Act is to clarify the bridge to hope
18 program by:

- 19 (1) Repealing the limitation that participants be
20 Temporary Assistance and Needy Families Program
21 recipients;



1 (2) Clarify that participants be in the first-to-work
2 program; and

3 (3) Expanding the eligible participants to include
4 students enrolled in an approved course of study,
5 including vocational education.

6 SECTION 2. Section 346-68, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
7 amended by amending subsections (a) and (b) to read as follows:

8 "(a) There is created within the department a post-
9 secondary education benefits program, to be known as the bridge
10 to hope program, for heads of households in the [~~temporary~~
11 ~~assistance to needy families~~] first to-work program.

12 (b) To receive assistance under this program, the [~~single~~
13 ~~parent~~] participant shall:

14 (1) Be enrolled as a student each term[+] in an approved
15 course of study, including but not limited to,
16 vocational education;

17 (2) Maintain passing grades or better throughout the
18 course of study; and

19 (3) Meet work activity requirements as defined by the
20 department."

21 SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
22 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.



1 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

2

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Report Title:

Bridge to Hope Program; TANF

Description:

Expands the bridge to hope program to enable all heads of households receiving financial assistance and participating in first-to-work to pursue education beyond the federal limit of one-year of vocational education.

