

JAN 18 2008

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## 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.



# S.B. NO. 2214

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

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INTRODUCED BY: Erzanne Chun Oakland  
Rudy H Baker  
Maaine R. Inouye  
Jim



S.B. NO. 2214

**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.

