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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 25, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 2770, H.D. 1 - RELATING TO BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM**

Hearing: Friday, February 25, 2008, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to expand the Bridge to Hope Program to enable all head of households receiving financial assistance and participating in the First-To-Work program to pursue a full range of educational activities as part of their work activities.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) is in support of this bill as it will allow these educational opportunities to become available to our other financial assistance recipients. Currently, by statute, only recipients on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are able to access the Bridge-To-Hope program. The proposed statutory change in H.B. 2770, H.D. 1, is necessary to expand the Bridge-To-Hope program to other financial assistance recipients which the Department supports.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



For Mon, Feb 25, 2008
House FIN
10:00 am

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

February 24, 2008

TO: Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
And members of the House Finance Committee

FROM: Debbie Shimizu, LSW
National Association of Social Workers, Hawaii (NASW)
Welfare and Employment Rights Coalition (WERC)

RE: HB 2770 HD1 Relating to Bridge to Hope Program- **STRONG SUPPORT**

Chair Oshiro and members of the House Finance Committee, I am Debbie Shimizu, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers, Hawaii Chapter (NASW) and a member of the Welfare and Employment Rights Coalition (WERC). I am testifying in strong **SUPPORT** of the Bridge-to-Hope program.

In 2000, WERC was instrumental in establishing the Bridge-to-Hope program to encourage welfare recipients to pursue a post-secondary education degree. At that time, the TANF program rules allowed education hours to count as a work activity and it is well documented that someone with a college degree can earn twice as much as someone with a high school degree. I am proud that the Legislature, the Department of Human Services and the advocates all agree that this program has proven to be successful and should be continued.

No money is being requested but technical amendments are needed. We support the amendments suggested by the Bridge to Hope program.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
HB3400 HD1 - RELATING TO PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

February 25, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii hereby provides testimony to the House Committee on Human Services & Housing on HB3400 HD1 – Relating to Public Assistance in support of this bill.

Founded in 1950, the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii is the oldest provider of legal services in the state. We provided civil legal assistance to those in need through nine offices located in Lihue, Waianae, Honolulu, Kaneohe, Kaunakakai, Lanai City, Wailuku, Kona and Hilo. Over the years we have provided leadership around public benefits issues and on an annual basis update our public benefits manual and provide a two-day training on public benefits. Our staff has also participated in national trainings on TANF and understands the complexity of this program.

This bill would make available public benefits for non-related guardians of children. Currently, a family that takes a non-relative child into their family who faces a financial cannot seek public assistance for that child. This bill would allow non-related guardians of children to receive public assistance on behalf of the child.

We believe that the availability of public assistance should not be limited to only related guardians to children. Many children are sometimes taken in by family friends and others who keep these children out of the child welfare system. To not allow these guardians to be eligible for public assistance when relative guardians regardless of income are seems incongruous to the states interest in maintaining homes for children outside of the foster care system. As guardianship does not require the guardian to take financial responsibility for that child – the parent still has that responsibility – eligibility for financial assistance should be available if the guardian qualifies.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Nalani Fujimori
Deputy Director
527-8014

Date: February 22, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice-Chair

From: Teresa Bill, Univ. Hawai'i Bridge to Hope Coordinator (956-8059)

Re: HB2770, HD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Monday Feb 25, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308

My name is Teresa Bill and. I am the Coordinator of the 10-campus University of Hawai'i Bridge to Hope program which works with the Dept. of Human Services. **I strongly support HB 2770 HD1** amending the statute establishing Bridge to Hope to enable all First-to-Work participants to pursue post-secondary education as part of their work activities.

If the Committee is entertaining clarifying amendments, I request inserting, "but not limited to" on Page 3, line 2 to read: "approved course of study, including, but not limited to vocational education." This clarification would correspond to the bill's intent and clarify that educational options are NOT to be limited to vocational education.

HB2770 does not require any additional funds. DHS has indicated that additional funding is not needed to expand the program, it can be offered within current budgets. The Dept. of Human Services has implemented a temporary policy that allows post-secondary education activities, but the statute needs to be amended to ensure a full range of educational options for all First-to-Work participants, all categories of TANF & TAONF families. Additionally the statutory change is necessary for DHS to fund on-campus student employment for state-funded clients. Currently, TAONF clients are not eligible for subsidized on-campus student employment through First-to-Work.

Although recent federal changes have rescinded the explicit prohibition on baccalaureate education effective Nov. 2008, HB2770 is still necessary to ensure that the academically supportive and successful programs offered by First-to-Work and Bridge to Hope are available to all clients, both TANF and TAONF. The State of Hawai'i acknowledged the importance of access to post-secondary education as an avenue to economic self-sufficiency when it created the Bridge to Hope program within DHS seven years ago.

I urge the legislature to stand behind its decision to include post-secondary education as part of First-to-Work activities as a strategy for self-sufficiency.

Please support HB2770 HD1 to give all First-to-Work participants access to education. I know Bridge to Hope students and former students have submitted testimony supporting this bill but could not be here in person. For these parents to take time to learn about the legislative process and submit testimony is a reflection of how strongly they feel.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Jeanne Y. Ohta

1016 A Hind Iuka Drive
Honolulu, HI 96821

February 25, 2008

To: Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair
And Members of the Committee on Finance

From: Jeanne Ohta

Re: HB 2770 HD1 Relating to Bridge to Hope Program
Hearing: February 25, 2008, 10:00 a.m., Room 308

Position: SUPPORT

Good morning, I am testifying today in support of HB 2770 Relating to Bridge to Hope program. This bill is also supported by the Hawaii Women's Coalition and is included in the coalition's 2008 Legislative Package.

This measure could be improved by amending the purpose to read: "The purpose of this Act is to clarify eligibility requirements of and expand the Bridge to Hope program to enable all heads of households who are receiving financial assistance and participating in the First-to-Work program to pursue a full range of educational activities as part of their work activities."

This bill requests a change to the statute establishing the post-secondary education program called Bridge to Hope within the Department of Human Services. The change will allow all heads of households receiving financial assistance and participating in First-to-Work to participate in a full range of educational activities as part of their work activities.

The current statute is limited to TANF or federally funded clients. The statute needs to be amended to include all families; to ensure that while federal rules may change, the State of Hawaii can remain committed to providing a full range of post secondary activities.

It is important to provide access to Bridge to Hope to all families. The Institute of Women's Policy Research published a study in 2006, "Resilient and Reaching for More, Challenges and Benefits of Higher Education for Welfare Participants and their Children." The study found that higher education had a host of positive financial, social, and emotional effects on low-income women and their children.

Besides the obvious improvement in earnings, participants said that education helped them overcome substance abuse, leave destructive relationships, and develop self-

confidence and hope in a positive future. Many survey participants indicated that their children benefited as well, with improved study habits and better grades.

The study also indicates that communities benefit when low-income women complete higher education. Nearly two-thirds of degree holders in the study chose to stay in their communities after completing their degree and most indicated an increased level of community involvement since their exposure to higher education. As a result, the benefits of higher education spilled beyond the confines of individuals and their families, and ultimately impacted larger communities.

This is a worthwhile measure that in the long-run would benefit the mothers, their children, and our state. Please pass this measure. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Date: February 22, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice-Chair

From: Kahealani Wright Bridge to Hope student participant

Re: HB 2770 HD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Monday, Feb. 25, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308

Aloha, my name is Kahealani Wright and I strongly support HB 2770 funding educational opportunities for all First-to-Work clients. I am a Bridge-to-Hope (BTH) participant who graduated in May 2007 with a BA in Psychology.

I am eternally grateful for the opportunities that I have been given from programs such as BTH and First-to-Work (FTW) which have allowed me to pursue my dream of obtaining a higher education. Without the help or support from these programs it is very likely that my education would have been significantly deterred if not completely obstructed.

Access to higher education opportunities through the FTW and BTH programs has been a crucial factor in allowing me to reach my goal of being able to provide for my children and myself without any outside assistance. The challenges of being a full-time student, while raising two children and working part-time have been well worth the struggle to become financially independent.

Last year's rule changes requiring 20 hours of work in addition to school "burned out" BTH and FTW participants and deterred individuals from obtaining a degree. The change in policy allowing BA degrees for First-to-Work clients was important and needs to be maintained.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my support of HB 2770. Please support this bill.

Kahealani Wright
858A Kupulau Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Date: February 22, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice-Chair

From: Christine Quemuel, Director
UH Manoa Women's Center 2600 Campus Rd. QLC #211 Honolulu, HI 96822

Re: HB 2770 HD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Monday, Feb. 25, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308

My name is Christine Quemuel and I **strongly support HB 2770** funding postsecondary educational opportunities for all TANF clients. I am the Director of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Women's Center and the UHM Bridge to Hope Campus Contact.

I have been working with the nationally acclaimed Bridge to Hope (BTH) Program since its inception. I help to provide academic and personal support services, as well as on-campus employment placements for the UHM BTH students. It has been amazing to work with the students, to see their growth as college students and to follow them through graduation and into professional careers. The UHM BTH students have gone on to graduate, find professional employment, and get off of welfare and out of poverty permanently. Some of the students have started careers as a public school teacher, a dental hygienist, a nurse, and a social worker. I have seen the children of the BTH students graduate high school and start going to college. One of the reasons these students have had so much success as students and parents was the original reduced work requirement that counted their classroom hours.

In August 2006, the mandatory work requirement was changed and our baccalaureate students had to work 20 - 32 hours per week in addition to being full-time students and single parents. I saw our students who were normally high academic achievers with good GPAs, suddenly struggling to maintain passing grades. I have heard from almost all of the students about the problems they were having at home with their children due to their increased stress levels trying to find enough hours in the day to meet all of the work, school, and parenting requirements. One student told me "it would be fine if I only had a 40 hr. day and my son didn't need me."

HB 2700 establishes in statute that a full range of educational options will be available for Bridge to Hope students, including baccalaureate degrees. And the reduced work requirement associated with the Bridge to Hope program is reinstated. I implore you to amend the Bridge to Hope statute to allow all TANF and TAONF clients to participate in postsecondary education as part of their welfare work activities.

Date: February 22, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice-Chair

From: Bonnie Godinez Kapiolani CC student and Bridge to Hope participant

Re: HB 2770 HD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Monday, Feb. 25, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308

Aloha. I am Bonnie Godinez and I strongly support HB 2770 funding educational opportunities for all First-to-Work clients. I am currently a Bridge-To-Hope (BTH) participant in the Associate of Science in the Travel and Tourism program at Kapiolani Community College.

In many ways both Bridge-To-Hope along with First-To-Work has helped me and my son. Being a young, single parent of a two year old son is hard enough. When the rules regarding education changed last fall requiring 20-32 hours of work on top of school, I found myself exhausted and my infant son could not get the full attention that he needs from me, especially at this point in time of his life.

It is important that the new DHS policy is available for all First-to-Work students. Now I am no longer limited to a 2-year program, I can now pursue my ultimate educational goal of a Bachelor of Science in the Travel Industry Management (TIM) program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. After receiving my Bachelors of Science I will one day be working in one of Hawaii's finest hotels or restaurant.

Currently most jobs that pay decent wages require at least a Bachelor degree. The entire purpose of receiving assistance from TANF is to one day leave the program and become financially independent. It is said that a person who rushes into something does not produce as great a product as the person who takes their time. Give participants of First-to-Work and BTH enough time to complete their education with a Bachelors and find a decent paying job.

I ask you to Support HB 2770 not only for First-To-Work and Bridge-To-Hope but also for the future of Hawaii and its people. For without the people continuing their education after high school there would be no hope for tomorrows' future.

Mahalo for your time.

Bonnie Godinez
1545 Linapuni Street APT# B809
Honolulu, HI 96819

Date: February 22, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice-Chair

From: Angela Washington former Bridge to Hope participant

Re: HB 2770 HD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Monday, Feb. 25, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308

My name is Angela Washington and I am a former Bridge to Hope student at the University of Hawaii - Manoa testifying in support of HB 2770 to allow educational activities for all First-to-Work recipients.

Last year as a new single parent participant in the TANF First-to-Work program, I was at a disadvantage because the new rules prohibited me from participating in the Bridge to Hope program with reduced work requirements while I attended U.H. The change in DHS policy was very helpful and allowed me to focus on my academics. This policy allowing baccalaureate degrees and reduced work requirements for students should be continued.

My B.A. degree will allow me to pursue a fruitful career where I can earn enough money to support my family independent of the welfare system. The vicious cycle of poverty will only continue unless we allow parents to receive the skills and education needed to provide for our families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Angela Washington
2591 Dole St. #F404
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

Date: February 22, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice-Chair

From: Ann Skipper Bridge to Hope graduate

Re: HB 2770 HD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Monday, Feb. 25, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308

My name is Ann Skipper and I **strongly support HB 2770** allowing all First-to-Work participants the ability to participate in Bridge to Hope. I am a recent (December 2007) graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology specializing in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology (EECB).

The BTH and First-to-Work (FTW) Education option has allowed me to pursue a college education in conservation biology to attain my goal of working with Hawaii's environment. Without the benefits provided by these programs, there is no way I would be able to attend school **and** make enough money to provide a home for myself and my son and pay for all of our necessities.

The First-to-Work education policy implemented after last legislative session re-instating fewer hours of paid employment for full-time students allows me to spend more time to do well in school and to spend with my son. The whole purpose of TANF is to help people become financially independent, so they won't need these benefits to take care of their children, but that is not possible without an education.

Please help us support ourselves and get off of welfare by supporting access to post-secondary education for ALL First-to-Work clients.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Ann Skipper
809 Kinau Street Apt 23
Honolulu, HI 96813

Date: February 22, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice-Chair

From: Aubrey Hillman Bridge to Hope student participant

Re: HB 2770 HD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Monday, Feb. 25, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308

I am Aubrey Hillman and I **strongly support Hb 2770** funding educational opportunities for all First-to-Work clients. I am a Bridge-to-Hope (BTH) participant in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at UH. Without BTH and First-to-Work (FTW) Education option I would not have been able to get into the Nursing Program at UH Manoa.

Last spring's rule changes re-instating the reduced work requirement for full-time enrolled students made such a difference. Last Fall the rules requiring 20-32 hours of work in addition to school nearly convinced me to quit school. I felt like my world had turned upside down. How was I going to meet the minimum requirements of twenty hours of work per week and go to school full time?

Now that I have been allowed to continue my education, I know that I will achieve my Nursing degree. The purpose of TANF is to help people become financially independent, that cannot happen without school or training. There's no point in offering TANF for five years without the opportunity to go to school.

As a parent my desire to build a future for my daughter and I gave me no choice but to go back to school. Being on welfare without getting an education or some type of training for a career which could support my daughter and I is a total waste of resources. All welfare does is put off the inevitable dependence on someone else. Please support access to post-secondary education for ALL First-to-Work clients.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Aubrey Hillman
537 B Kipuka Pl.
Kailua, HI 96734

FINtestimony

From: Joel Fischer [jfischer@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Friday, February 22, 2008 12:38 PM
To: FINtestimony
Subject: HB2770; FIN; 2/25; 10AM; Rm 308

Importance: High

Attachments: Card for Joel Fischer <jfischer@hawaii.edu>



jfischer.vcf (343 B)

HB2770, HD1, Relating to Bridge to Hope
FIN; Chair, Rep Oshiro

PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.

This bill helps to preserve the crucial Bridge to Hope program. This program is even more important in the face of the recent Draconian changes in rules for programs like Bridge to Hope that will eliminate many recipients from using these programs to help them achieve success in their lives.

Anything the legislature can do to help this program, and the recipients who are trying to make something out of themselves by getting advanced degrees, would be a critical step in the right direction.

Thank you.

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW
President, 19-3, Democratic Party

Professor
University of Hawai'i, School of Social Work Henke Hall Honolulu, HI 96822

"It is reasonable that everyone who asks justice should DO justice."
Thomas Jefferson

"There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because one's conscience tells one that it is right."
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Never, never, never quit."
Winston Churchill

Date: February 22, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice-Chair

From: Enjoli Rapozo-Hoskins Bridge to Hope and UH Graduate

Re: HB 2770 HD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Monday, Feb. 25, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308

I am Enjoli Rapozo-Hoskins and I **strongly support HB 2770** funding educational opportunities for all First-to-Work clients. I have participated in Bridge-to-Hope (BTH) previously and have recently graduated from the College of Education at UH-Manoa with a dual certification to be an elementary and special education teacher. First to Work has this rule that will only count 2 years of education towards state requirements from a non-vocational program. My 2 years ran up at the beginning of December and I did not graduate until December 16. Those two weeks were not counted towards meeting First to Work requirements. Hence, I had to either find a full time job or volunteer somewhere. This made the last two weeks of school horrible. This needs to change. The State should be supporting our education because education truly is the key to a more successful and happy future.

Without First to Work and the option to pursue a BA in teaching, I would have never stayed in college or graduated. Instead I would be working at a dead end, unhappy job that probably pays minimum wage. With four children, that still wouldn't support my family. In our society, we need some kind of BA degree to have a future and one day secure a job that would support a family.

Teaching in elementary special education is my way of reaching out and giving back to our community through our children. This is a dream of mine that I wouldn't have been able to accomplish without the help of FTW and its education policy.

The teacher certification program is a very intense program and very time consuming. Just one semester of the new rules requiring 20 hours of work in addition to full time school was already really exhausting. Working took my focus away from school and made my life a lot more stressful, but I had to do it. The change in DHS policy allowing reduced work for full-time students needs to be made permanent. If pursuing education for a BA degree did not qualify me for FTW, then I would have had to find a way to work full time and maybe go to school part time, if at all possible.

The only way to secure a successful future is to go to college and get a bachelors degree that would place you in a well-paying job. To me, this is the only guarantee for FTW clients to stay off of assistance. If the goal of the FTW program is to get the clients on the program to be more successful and have a better future, then they need to count the education to attain a BA degree.

Our state programs need to continue to help those of us who are trying to make a difference in our lives and the lives of our children by going to college.

Enjoli Rapozo-Hoskins

410 Magellan Avenue Apt #409 Honolulu, HI 96813

Date: February 22, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on FINANCE
Rep. Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Rep. Marilyn Lee, Vice-Chair

From: Joelene Cruz Bridge to Hope student participant

Re: HB 2770 HD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Monday, Feb. 25, 2008 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308

I am Joelene Cruz and I **strongly support HB 2770** allowing educational opportunities for all First-to-Work clients. I am a Bridge-to-Hope (BTH) participant in the Bachelor's of Social Work Program at the University of Hawaii Manoa.

Without BTH and First-to-Work (FTW) Education option I would not have been able to pursue my educational goals, training and skills needed to maintain descent employment and financial security in the near future. In Fall 2003, I applied for school at Honolulu Community College and decided to major in Human Services. I started working on campus at the Student Life & Development Offices as a Student Aide; two years later I graduated from HCC and transferred to the University of Hawaii Manoa.

Today, I'm pursuing a BSW at the school of social work and I would ultimately like to earn a Master's of Social Work someday. I'm a single mother of four children. At this point, I still have my son (15 years old) and my daughter (13 years old) in the home. My 21 years old daughter is still at home, and a 2005 graduate from Honolulu Community College with a Certificate in Cosmetology. Education has become an important part of our family.

Although the purpose of TANF is to help people become financially independent, that cannot happen without school or training. There's no point in offering TANF for five years without the opportunity for students to pursue our educational goals. Please support access to post-secondary education for ALL First-to-Work clients.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Joelene Cruz
1139-B Hala Dr. Bldg.14
Honolulu, HI 96817