

LINDA LINGLE  
GOVERNOR



LILLIAN B. KOLLER  
DIRECTOR

HENRY OLIVA  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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

March 13, 2008

**LATE**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

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

Hearing: Thursday, March 13, 2008, 1:15 p.m.  
Conference Room 016, 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.



**LATE**

**HB2770 Relating to Bridge to Hope Program**  
House Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

Date: March 13, 2008

Time: 1:15pm

Room: 016

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs supports the University of Hawai'i Bridge to Hope student employment and academic program because it is well researched that a person's achievement level of education increases that individual's capacity to earn and for many of our TANF program beneficiaries, this is the best way to escape poverty. Approximately 32% of TANF participants are Hawaiian; and, moreover, almost all of these participants are women. It is our experience that many of these beneficiaries, mostly single mothers, desire the best for their families but are unable to get out of the cycle of poverty without furthering their education. Passage of this bill will significantly help Hawai'i families move from welfare to self-reliance.

Many of the beneficiaries that OHA has assisted frequently request for financial aid in vocational training and in achieving advanced degrees. The federal restriction, to twelve months of vocational education, however, does not take into account the pre-requisite requirements of many vocational programs that these beneficiaries are attracted to such as certified nursing, licensed practical nursing, dental hygienist, to name a few. Moreover, twelve months is not sufficient time to enable a TANF recipient to transition from welfare to self-reliance.

The Bridge to Hope Program is successful and a stellar model for our nation. State stature must be amended to insure that these first-to-work clients have continued access to post-secondary education opportunities. Mahalo nui loa.

**Jeanne Y. Ohta**  
1016 A Hind Iuka Drive  
Honolulu, HI 96821

**LATE**

March 13, 2008

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair  
And Members of the Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

Re: HB 2770 HD1 Relating to Bridge to Hope Program  
Hearing: March 13, 2008, 1:15 p.m., Room 016

Position: SUPPORT

I am testifying today in support of HB 2770 HD1 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 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.

I also support any amendments suggested by the coordinator of the Bridge to Hope Program.

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.

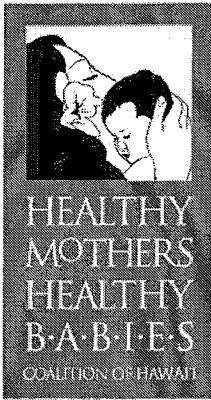
It is important to provide access to Bridge to Hope to all families. The Institute of Women's Policy Research published a study in 2006, "Resilient and Reaching for More, Challenges and Benefits of Higher Education for Welfare Participants and their Children." The study found that higher education had 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.



**LATE**

March 12, 2008

Committee: Senate Human Services and Public Housing

HB 2761 HD1: Relating to Women's Health

Honorable Chairperson Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Human Services and Public Housing Committee.

My name is Jackie Berry, Executive Director for Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies of Hawaii (HMHB). HMHB is committed to promoting and improving reproductive, pregnancy and family wellness through training, advocacy and community awareness.

HMHB is testifying today in support of HB 2761 HD1 that requires not less than 6 months post-partum and interconception care for women of childbearing age who are participants in the Hawaii QUEST health insurance program.

Affordability of care is a major concern for women, and improved access to preconception and interconception care is needed. Many women in Hawaii go without health insurance simply because they can not afford it, and Medicaid is a primary mechanism for extending health coverage to women of Hawaii with low incomes and who do not have health insurance. Medicaid has been demonstrated to be effective in improving access to health care for women with low incomes.

Having access to extended health insurance for women on QUEST would provide additional post-partum resources and family planning services during a critical time when an unintended pregnancy may occur.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.