

Hawaii Aging Advocates Coalition

Testimony to the Joint Senate Committee on
Human Services Public Housing and Judiciary and Labor
Tuesday, February 5, 2008
Conference Room 016; 1:15pm

Founding
Organizations

City & County
of Honolulu
Elderly Affairs
Karen Miyaki
Craig Yamaguchi

City & County
of Honolulu
Service Providers
Tony Wong

FACE
Stan Bain
Jim Howell

Hawaii Caregiver
Coalition
Tony Lenzer

HARA
Al Hamai
Bruce McCullough

Hawaii County
Office on Aging
Alan Parker
Lito Asuncion

Hawaii County
Service Providers
Debra Nakaji

JACOSA
Lyn McNeff

Kauai Agency on
Elderly Affairs
Kealoha Takahashi

Kokua Council
Lary Geller

Maui County
Office on Aging
John Tomoso

Maui County
Service Providers
Kathy Louis

Maui Long Term
Care Partnership
Rita Barreras

PABEA
Gary Simon
Eldon Wegner

Co-Conveners
Wes Lum
Hawaii Caregiver
Coalition

Harry Mattson
Kokua Council

RE: S.B. No. 2044, RELATING TO CAREGIVERS.

Chairs Chun Oakland and Taniguchi, and Members of the Joint Committee,

My name is Wes Lum and I am testifying on behalf of the Hawaii Aging Advocates Coalition (HAAC). **HAAC supports this measure.**

This measure amends the Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) law to permit an eligible employee to collect up to 4 weeks of TDI benefit payments to care for a family member with a qualifying disability.

We believe that the costs of paid family leave benefits business. When you have an employer who is good to you, you stick with them. A short-term investment leads to long-term gains as satisfied, productive employees remain loyal. Investing in employees is good for business.

Additionally, paid family leave makes Hawaii a better, more attractive place for business. Paid family leave will likely attract skilled workers and therefore help, rather than hinder, Hawaii's business environment by increasing competition for workers in the marketplace.

Finally, workers should not be forced to choose between their families and their jobs. Frail older adults need care, and without government action, families will continue to suffer under the strain of trying to secure a paycheck. Employees need financial support to meet their obligations to work and eldercare.

HAAC supports this measure and asks for your favorable consideration. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

All Hawaii Chapter - Hawaii Division

418 Kuwili Street, #105
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

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To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & PUBLIC HOUSING

Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Clayton Hee, Vice Chair
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & LABOR

From: Lyn Moku, Division Manager Phone: 532-0806

Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Subject: **SUPPORT OF SB 2044 RELATING TO CAREGIVERS**

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society supports SB 2044 Relating to Caregivers that amends the temporary disability insurance law to permit an eligible employee to collect up to 4 weeks of temporary disability insurance benefit payments to care for a family member with a qualifying disability.

Multiple sclerosis is a chronic disease of the central nervous system that can affect every part of the body. Symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary from person to person and from time to time in the same person. They range from tingling to blindness and paralysis and can be moderate or severe; temporary or permanent. And MS is not a fatal disease. People with MS have a normal or near-normal life expectancy.

Due to the chronic, often disabling nature of MS, approximately 20% to 25% of individuals with MS need long-term care at some point during the course of their illness. Home healthcare needs are very expensive, however, and most people do not have the resources to pay for in-home help or do not qualify for public benefits. Family members most often provide that care while balancing a career, raising a family, and/or caring for their aging parents or other adult family members.

The *State of Hawaii Family Caregiver Needs Assessment* prepared for the Joint Legislative Committee on Family Caregiving reported that about 55% of the caregivers are employed, with about 78% of employed caregivers working full time in addition to providing caregiving. And their dual role is effecting their employment in a variety of ways: 94% must rearrange their work schedules. 77.9% take time off during their work day. 52.7% experience crisis care

interruptions. People are reducing their work hours, taking leaves, turning down promotions, changing jobs, etc.

There is support for this bill from community organizations, health care and human service professionals, labor unions, and caregivers. The opposition is from businesses. But businesses are community members too and have a stake in the continuing success of business in Hawaii. With our the aging population, low unemployment and dwindling workforce, and the need for people to work longer, it is in the best interest of business to support family caregivers – many of whom provide the workforce needed to sustain our economy. If government cannot provide the health care that people need and the cost of caregiving has to be shared, it should be shared by everyone in our Society. The emotional, mental, physical and financial burden is already shouldered by many family caregivers and their families.

The proposed Bill includes provisions for reasonable compensation for wage loss caused by the need to care for a family member with a serious health condition. Providing these benefits to family caregivers will allow them to continue working and caring for their family members without further straining family and/or personal finances.

Please support SB 2044. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of this Bill.

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The Twenty-Fourth Legislature
Regular Session of 2008

THE SENATE

Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

Committee on Judiciary and Labor

Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair

Senator Clayton Hee, Vice Chair

State Capitol, Conference Room 016

Tuesday, February 5, 2008; 1:15 p.m.

**STATEMENT OF THE ILWU LOCAL 142 ON S.B. 2044
RELATING TO CAREGIVERS**

The ILWU Local 142 supports S.B. 2044, which amends the temporary disability insurance law to permit an eligible employee to collect up to four weeks of temporary disability insurance benefit payments to care for a family member with a qualifying disability.

Many workers in Hawaii today are called upon to be family caregivers. These individuals are forced to take time off from work (either unpaid leave or vacation) or even retire to provide care to family members who are disabled and/or elderly and need assistance with one more activities of daily living.

Allowing family caregivers to claim TDI benefits in order to provide care to family members serves multiple purposes. First, it allows for family caregivers to fulfill their obligations to family members without undue financial hardship. Second, it allows family members needing care to remain at home and not require institutionalization. Third, it promotes good will in the workplace that boosts morale and productivity and instills greater loyalty to the employer. All in all, a win-win situation.

We have, however, a couple of concerns.

One concern is how the provisions of S.B. 2044 will work in coordination with Act 44 (2003 Session), which requires employers with 100 or more employees to allow 10 days of sick leave to be used for family leave purposes. Many employers, in particular those with collective bargaining agreements, offer both TDI and sick leave. Since the bill says that use of TDI will prevail if there is a conflict with another law, that may mean employees of employers with more than 100 may only use TDI while on family leave rather than 10 days of sick leave.

Another concern is how to deal with multiple caregivers for the same family member. Without coordination, there is the potential for more than one caregiver to claim benefits to care for the same family member at the same time.

S.B. 2044 is a commendable attempt to address what appears to be a growing problem--that of disabled and elderly family members needing more care and workers required to make economic sacrifices to fulfill family obligations. The ILWU urges passage of S.B. 2044.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views and concerns.

To the honorable members of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

To the honorable members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor

RE: S.B. 2044- and public hearing on 2/5/08

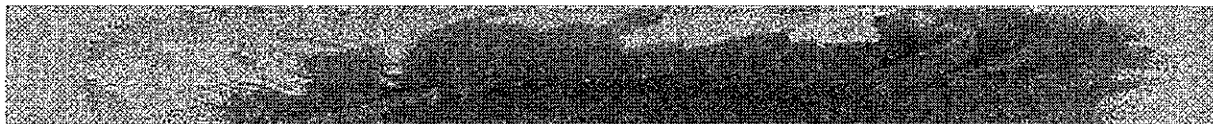
I am writing in support of S.B. 2044 which would allow up to 4 weeks of TDI benefits to family members of a disabled person. This would allow care to stay within the family, without risk of someone losing their job or not being able to pay their bills. It would be far more cost effective to help the temporarily disabled to be cared for in their own home, with the assistance of a relative, than it would be to continue utilizing state and federal monies toward temporary nursing home stays. I urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

Kirsten K. Nosek, LCSW

Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Liberty Dialysis Hawaii- Maui

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TO : COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Les Ihara , Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR
Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Clayton Hee, Vice-Chair

FROM: Eldon L. Wegner, Ph.D.,
PABEA (Policy Advisory Board for Elder Affairs)

SUBJECT: SB 2044 Relating to Caregivers

HEARING: 1:15 pm Tuesday, February 5, 2008
Conference Room 016, Hawaii State Capitol

PURPOSE: Amends the TDI law to permit an eligible employee to collect up to 4 weeks of temporary disability insurance benefit payments to care for a family member with a qualifying disability

POSITION: The Policy Advisory Board for Elder Affairs strongly supports approval of SB 2044 which would create 4 weeks of paid family leave for employed caregivers meeting certain criteria through the Temporary Disability Insurance program.

RATIONALE:

I am offering testimony on behalf of PABEA, the Policy Advisory Board for Elder Affairs, which is an appointed board tasked with advising the Executive Office on Aging (EOA). My testimony does not represent the views of the EOA but of the Board.

This bill is a recommendation of the Joint Legislative Taskforce on Family Caregiving, which is charged with developing comprehensive and coherent policies to support families caring for frail elderly and other disabled persons;

- § The proposed policy, which is based on an existing program operating in California, would provide meaningful support for persons balancing work and caregiving obligations and would increase the ability for such persons to continue in the labor force. The four weeks paid leave would enable caregivers to attend to the most urgent situations. Employers would also benefit to the degree that the policy increased retention of their experienced workers.
- § Surveys in 2007 of employers and of family caregivers in Hawaii provide data which support the need for assisting employed caregivers and a growing recognition by employers of the lost productivity due to the strains of working caregivers,

- § The 2007 survey of family caregivers in Hawaii showed that 55% were balancing work and employment. They reported many strains in balancing these obligations, often resulting in absences, interruptions during work hours, leaving early, and anxieties which reduced productivity.
- § Reducing hours of work, reducing work responsibilities, and passing up promotions result in substantial financial sacrifices by employed caregivers. A high proportion of unemployed caregivers also reported leaving jobs because of their obligations as caregivers, usually at great financial sacrifice to their families.
- § The proposed policy provides four paid weeks per year to enable caregivers to attend to the most urgent situations. The survey data suggest such a supportive policy would likely result in greater workforce retention, benefiting both the caregiver, the employer and the general society, especially if combined with other workplace policies such as flexible hours to support caregivers.
- § The proposed policy mandates a small employee contribution to the TDI for this purpose. By spreading the cost across the entire labor force, the cost can be kept low.
- § No additional financial contribution by the employer is required by this benefit. Employers would benefit by increased retention of their experienced workers and perhaps greater productivity due to a reduction of the strains experienced by working caregivers.

In conclusion, paid family leave exists in California and in many other countries as a significant support to family caregivers and as an economic policy which encourages labor force participation. We believe such a policy would have positive impacts for Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting this bill.

To the Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing and the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor who are having a public hearing on Tuesday, Feb. 5, @ 1:15 p.m., in Room 016

Aloha kakou,

I support S.B. 2044, which amends the temporary disability insurance law to permit an eligible employee to collect up to 4 weeks of temporary disability insurance benefit payments to care for a family member with a qualifying disability. I also support the companion H.B. 2520 and submitted testimony to that committee.

Family Caregivers who have fulltime jobs are increasing in their importance to keeping frail elders and disabled adults in their own homes, which is a cost-effective modality of care. This modality, as you know, becomes more effective with a continuum and array of home and community-based services. Family Caregivers are the natural and appropriate complement to these services and I believe they must be supported in every way.

Me ka mahalo pono,

John A. H. Tomoso, MSW, ACSW, LSW

Maui County Executive on Aging

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