

**George S. Massengale
4340 Pahoia Avenue, #18D
Honolulu, Hi 96816**

LATE

February 11, 2008

To: Senate Committee on Tourism and Governmental Operations and the Committee on Human Services & Public Housing

Hearing: February 12, 2008, 2:00 PM, Conf. Rm. 229

Re: SB2108

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

Chairs Nishihara, Chun Oakland, and members of the committees. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB2198. Today, I testify before you as an individual and former vocational rehabilitation programs administrator. I am sad to say that in the last 40 years we have made very little progress in obtaining competitive employment opportunities for disabled individuals who live in Hawaii.

Although the economy in Hawaii is softening, Hawaii still has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation. However for people with people with disabilities the Hawaii unemployment rate is over 60%.

Competitive employment is one of the last outcome steps of vocational rehabilitation training programs. Many individuals who receive vocational rehabilitation services never enter the work force, or if they do it is in job that provides no opportunity for advancement or a "living wage".

SB2108, is a good bill and would removed one of the barriers to meaningful employment by establishing a procurement preference for companies bidding on state and county contracts that pledge to hire the disabled and recipients of public assistance.

I would urge this committee to pass the measure on to the Judiciary and Labor Committee. Mahalo, for the opportunity to offer testimony on this important and far reaching measure.

Sincerely,



George Massengale



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1809 Bachelot Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Phone: 808-531-0555

Fax: 808-533-7264

www.lanakilahawaii.org



LATE

State of Hawaii

Senate Committee on Human Services & Public Housing

The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

The Honorable Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Tourism and Government Operations

The Honorable Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair

The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

Tuesday, February 12, 2008, 2:00 pm

Conference Room 229

SB 2108 – Relating to Public Procurement

Senators Chun Oakland, Ihara, Nishihara and Kim. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2108 in principle, which establishes a preference to bidders who employ persons with disabilities or recipients of income payments under public assistance programs.

Lanakila Rehabilitation Center provides training and job placement for persons with disabilities. We support the concept to provide employers incentives to hire individuals who do not fit the stereotypical “employee.” We are too aware of the capabilities of these individuals, and the barriers they face when attempting to secure competitive employment.

However, as an organization that bids on competitive contracts issued by the state and county, we are concerned about the ability to enforce such a policy without the allocation of appropriate resources. We have experienced situations where we were outbid by competitors only to hear that change orders were issued subsequent to the contract award, or that perhaps the contractor was not paying their workers the required prevailing wage.

We applaud the Senate for supporting the employment of marginalized populations; however, appropriate resources must be allocated to ensure the intent of the legislation is carried out.

Thank you.

Submitted by:
Marian E. Tsuji
President & CEO