

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM  
LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



**SB 2214 RELATING TO BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM**

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

January 31, 2008 at 1:30 p.m.

by  
Francisco Hernandez  
Vice Chancellor for Students  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

**Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing**

Thursday, January 31, 2008  
1:30 p.m.

by  
Francisco Hernandez  
Vice Chancellor for Students  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

**SB2214      Relating to Bridge to Hope Program**

Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Ihara and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i supports SB2214 amending the state statute to ensure that all First-to-Work clients have continued access to a full range of post-secondary education opportunities. However, as stated in previous testimony, the University of Hawai'i prefers SB2210 as the language the Department of Human Services and the UH Bridge to Hope Coordinator have agreed will accomplish both agencies' goals of post-secondary access for welfare participants. If SB2214 is to continue, we support language submitted by the BTH Coordinator amending the "Purpose" on page 5 line 3 to read:

(3) "Clarifying that participants may pursue the full range of post-secondary educational opportunities as part of their work activities."

The University has actively supported access to post-secondary education for welfare recipients since 2000 when legislation created the Bridge to Hope education program within the Dept. of Human Services. We now urge the legislature to make appropriate amendments to ensure that a full range of post-secondary education options are available, especially baccalaureate programs.

In addition to the support of President McClain and the system-wide UH Commission on the Status of Women, faculty and staff at every campus have given their time and full support to its implementation on our campuses.

Since Fall 2000, the University and the Department of Human Service have successfully partnered to maintain education as a work activity; reduce work requirements for full-time students, provide on-campus employment, and student support services for the needs specific to student parents.

This partnership has resulted in over 600 First-to-Work clients participating in on-campus Bridge to Hope employment and student services. With students in the educational pipeline moving from community colleges to baccalaureate campuses, over 150 students have earned Associate of Arts degrees at the community colleges and nearly 100 have earned Bachelor of Arts degrees. Popular and highly employable degrees include: Social Work, Nursing, Dental Hygiene, Teaching, Accounting, Software Technology, Counseling, Business Administration, Paralegal, Office Management, various Health Sciences, etc. These graduates are now fully employed and no longer receive cash assistance.

While the Dept. of Human Services has modified their education policy to accommodate both federal and state-funded participants, the statutory change is necessary to ensure that a full range of educational opportunities are always available. We are particularly disturbed with the

federal restriction to baccalaureate education, which is particularly necessary for women to earn a wage sufficient to support a family.

The federal restriction to 1 year of vocational education does not take into account the reality of pre-requisites for many 2-year vocational programs, including the economically viable health sciences careers (e.g. Dental Hygiene, Licensed Practical Nursing, Respiratory Therapist). For example, a two-year medical lab technician program has nearly 1 full year of pre-requisites before the student can even apply to the program. Limiting education activities to 2 years effectively limits students' participation in educational programs that can provide lifelong economic security.

The University strongly supports this program and believes that its passage will be a significant help for Hawai'i families seeking to move from welfare to self-reliance. We believe that providing educational opportunities to students on welfare is consistent with the University's Strategic Plan goals of access, service to the State and diversity.

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

January 31, 2008

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

From: Jeanne Ohta

Re: SB 2214 Relating to Bridge to Hope Program  
Hearing: Thursday, January 31, 2008, 1:30 p.m., Room 016

Position: SUPPORT with Amendments

Good afternoon, I am testifying today in support with amendments of SB 2214 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.

The language of SB2210 is preferred over the language in this measure.

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: January 31, 2008

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

From: Teresa Bill, Univ. Hawai'i Bridge to Hope Coordinator

Re: SB2214 relating to Bridge to Hope  
Thursday Jan 31, 2008 1:30 p.m.  
Conference Room 016 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 226

**LATE**

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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 respectfully request that the language of SB 2214 be replaced with SB 2210 to utilize language agreed to by DHS and UH in a bill with a more appropriate title. Additionally, the "purpose" section of SB 2210 more accurately reflects the purpose of this bill.**

The intent of both bills is the same: Amend the statute establishing Bridge to Hope to enable all First-to-Work participants to pursue post-secondary education as part of their work activities. The language in SB2210 and submitted below has been agreed to by DHS and First-to-Work. Everyone is in agreement about the intent to extend educational activities beyond vocational education, and everyone is in agreement that the statutory change is necessary.

If the Committee wishes to amend SB 2214 instead of replacing the content, I request to following specific amendments:

1. That the PURPOSE of the bill (Page 4, line 17 thru Page 5, line 5) be substituted with the Purpose from SB2210 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."
2. That SECTION 2 (b) be amended to read:
  - (1) Be enrolled as a student each term[;] in an approved course of study, including but not limited to, vocational education.

The intent and purpose of this bill is to address the federal restriction limiting educational activities to vocational education programs, and to establish that first-to-work participants may participate in the full range of education options. We preferred not to list the educational options because we don't want to limit areas but offer a full range of educational options.

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. That was why we were here last session; to argue for the need to allow post-secondary education activities for welfare participants. While the federal government limits educational activities to vocational

programs less than 12 months, the State of Hawai'i has committed to continuing access to college as a means for welfare participants to gain the skills and education necessary for life-long economic self-sufficiency. Last session DHS indicated that additional funding was not needed to expand program eligibility, it could be offered within current budgets. That is how we achieved the recent policy change to accommodate education activities. However, this statutory change is necessary for DHS to maintain the policy and 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.

SB 2214 needs to be passed for many reasons, primarily because the current statute limits participation to only federally-funded TANF recipients and the federal government specifically prohibits baccalaureate education activities and limits vocational education to 1 year education directly leading into specific employment. While a certificate in cosmetology is acceptable, a pre-nursing Associate of Arts degree is not. If the State is interested in maximizing clients' use of their TANF benefits, allowing a full range of educational activities as a countable work activity is key.

The testimony of others will offer detailed and personal information about the long-term economic and community benefits of supporting post-secondary education as the most effective means by which women can achieve life-long economic self-sufficiency and leave poverty, not just welfare.

A recent survey of Bridge to Hope graduates working 33+ hours per week are earning median annual salaries of \$34,899 which translates to \$16.77 per hour vs. \$7.15 per hour for welfare "leavers" nationally. We're still crunching numbers but wanted to share that preliminary, positive statistic. The Bridge to Hope program has been a success with over 600 participants and 265 students earning degrees.

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. This bill providing for a state-funded education program within First-to-Work is absolutely necessary.

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. This decision is a smart long-term investment as these participants gain education, pursue economically viable careers and eventually pay more taxes than were ever spent on their families.

The motto of the U.H. Bridge to Hope program is "Education to leave poverty, not just welfare." It serves us well to remember that many welfare "leavers" nationwide are working fulltime yet remain in poverty unable to fully support their families.

Please support SB2214 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.



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

**LATE**

January 31, 2008

MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **S.B. 2214 - RELATING TO BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM**

Hearing: Thursday, January 31, 2008; 1:30 p.m.  
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of S.B. 2214 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 S.B. 2214 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.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE INTENT OF  
SB2214 - RELATING TO BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM

January 31, 2008 at 1:30 p.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii hereby provides testimony to the Senate Committees on Education and Human Services & Public Housing on SB2214 – Relating to Bridge to Hope Program, in strong support of the intent of this bill, however we prefer SB2210 as the vehicle for the Bridge to Hope Program.

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.

The Bridge to Hope program is one of the most successful local models in moving families in poverty to self-sufficiency through higher education. Unfortunately, recent changes to TANF work requirements have significantly limited the higher education activities which may count for a families continued eligibility for public assistance.

Under these recent changes, a single parent must participate in a work activity for 32 hours per week with 20 hours in core activities. A two-parent household must participate in work activities totally 35 hours per week with 30 hours in core activities if they do not have federally funded child care. These hours increase to 55 hours per week, 50 in core activities if they do receive federally funded child care.

The only education allowed as a core activity are “organized educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations requiring training other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree. Vocational educational training must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily.” Further, a parent only has 12 months in their lifetime to participate. Other education activities directly related to employment may count as non-core activities.

Because of these changes Bridge to Hope participants will not be able to meet the work requirements set by federal rules and participate in baccalaureate education programs. To ensure the on-going success of the Bridge to Hope program, the law must be amended to allow single and two-parent households eligible for first to work to participate in educational programs that include baccalaureate education.

While we support the intent of this bill, we prefer SB2214 for its language. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Nalani Fujimori  
Deputy Director  
527-8014



For Thurs, Jan 31, 2008  
Senate HSP  
1:30 pm

National Association of Social Workers

**LATE**

Hawaii Chapter

January 28, 2008

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair  
And members of the Senate Human Services and Public Housing Committee

FROM: Debbie Shimizu, LSW  
National Association of Social Workers, Hawaii

RE: SB 2214 Relating to Bridge to Hope Program- **STRONG SUPPORT**

Chair Chun Oakland and members of the Senate Human Services and Public Housing 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. However, effective October 2006, the new TANF Re-authorization Act changed the rules and now does not count education in a baccalaureate program as a work activity.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~, 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 despite ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ TANF Re-authorization Act ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~. *The changes of the*

I believe that SB 2214 is a better vehicle based on the title. Since this bill is only requesting language amendments and does not have an monetary request, it is more appropriate to be in a bill titled "Bridge to Hope Program.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



For Thurs, Jan 31, 2008  
Senate HSP  
1:30 pm

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

January 28, 2008

1/31

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And members of the Senate Human Services and Public Housing Committee

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National Association of Social Workers, Hawaii

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