

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Bridge to Hope
Serving UH Welfare Recipient Students

Date: February 22, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

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

Re: SB2214, SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Friday February 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 210

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 SB 2214 SD1** 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.

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.

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 until very recently (Feb 15, 2008) prohibited baccalaureate education activities. While recent rules issued by federal DHHS have lifted the prohibition on baccalaureate education, the accompanying rules are not supportive of academic success. 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 current First-to-Work Education Policy is a successful combination of paid employment and academic activities.

2600 Campus Road, Queen Lili'uokalani Center for Student Services 211, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822-2205
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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 SD1 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.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
SB2214 SD1 - RELATING TO BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM

February 22, 2008 at 11:00 a.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii hereby provides testimony to the Senate Committees on Education and Human Services & Public Housing on SB2214 SD1 – Relating to Bridge to Hope Program, in strong 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.

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.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Nalani Fujimori
Deputy Director
527-8014



HAWAII
WOMEN
WORK!

AN AFFILIATE OF THE
NATIONAL NETWORK
FOR WOMEN'S
EMPLOYMENT

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Honolulu, HI 96822
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Hawai'i Women Work!
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Date: February 20, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE on WAYS and MEANS
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

From: Barbara Tavares

Re: SB 2224,SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Friday, Feb. 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211

I write in **support of SB 2214**, which will ensure that all TANF and TAONF clients have an opportunity to participate in a full range of post-secondary educational activities.

I have worked with low-income families in Hawaii for over 35 years, as a Headstart teacher on Maui, with community based organizations on both Maui and Oahu, and currently as a program manager for related programs in the University of Hawaii system. Four years ago I was asked to participate in the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency project. I feel qualified to address this community issue.

- Education and training is a way out of poverty for families, and the parents that head those families.
- This training and education makes tax users into taxpayers.
- Career skills families to better support their children, avoiding other poverty risks and perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Gaining such training and education is the challenge HB 2770 intends to address by enabling a broader group of TANF recipients to participate in educational programs.

- Current TANF rules greatly limit the educational programs allowable to count toward federal benchmarks.
- These rules do not address the reality that most "two-year" programs take three to four years, even for middle class students. Many occupationally specific programs require prerequisite knowledge in advanced math or science
- Regulations do not address the reality that most students are also employed at least half time if not longer, or the issues faces by a parent that also has child rearing and household maintenance duties.

Promoting equal economic opportunity for all Hawai'i families through services, communication & advocacy



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Written Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
February 22, 2008 at 11:00 a.m.

by
Virginia S. Hinshaw, Chancellor
and
Francisco Hernandez
Vice Chancellor for Students
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB2214 SD1 Relating to the Bridge to Hope Program

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Tsutsui and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawaii **supports SB2214 SD1** amending the state statute to ensure that all First-to-Work clients have continued access to a full range of post-secondary education opportunities.

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.

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.

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.



For WAM
Friday, Feb 22, 2008
11:00 am

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

February 20, 2008

TO: Senator Roz Baker, Chair
And members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee

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

RE: SB 2214 SD1 Relating to Bridge to Hope Program- **STRONG SUPPORT**

Chair Baker and members of the Senate Ways and Means 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 the changes to the TANF Re-authorization Act.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Date: February 20, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

From: Ann Skipper, Bridge to Hope Graduate

Re: SB 2214, SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Friday, Feb 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 210

My name is Ann Skipper and I **strongly support SB 2214** 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 20, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

From: Angela Washington, former BTH participant

Re: SB 2214, SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Friday, Feb 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 210

My name is Angela Washington and I am a former Bridge to Hope student at the University of Hawaii - Manoa testifying in support of SB 2214 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 20, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

From: Bonnie Godinez, Bridge to Hope participant at Kapiolani CC

Re: SB 2214, SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Friday, Feb 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 226

Aloha. I am Bonnie Godinez and I strongly support SB 2214 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 SB2214 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 20, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

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

Re: SB 2214, SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Friday, Feb 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 210

My name is Christine Quemuel and I **strongly support SB 2214** 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."

SB 2214 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 20, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

From: Enjoli Rapozo-Hoskins, Bridge to Hope Graduate

Re: SB 2214, SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Friday, Feb 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 210

I am Enjoli Rapozo-Hoskins and I **strongly support SB 2214** 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 20, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

From: Joelene Cruz, Bridge to Hope participant

Re: SB 2214, SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Friday, Feb 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 210

I am Joelene Cruz and I **strongly support SB 2214** 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

Date: February 20, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

From: Kahealani Wright, former Bridge to Hope participant at UH-Hilo

Re: SB 2214, SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
Friday, Feb 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 210

Aloha, my name is Kahealani Wright and I strongly support SB 2214 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 SB 2214. Please support this bill.

Kahealani Wright
858A Kupulau Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Date: February 20, 2008

To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice-Chair

From: Kory ONaga, Bridge to Hope graduate

Re: SB 2214, SD1 relating to Bridge to Hope
 Friday, Feb 22, 2008 11:00 a.m.
 Conference Room 211 1 copy to Committee Clerk, room 210

I am Kory Leinani Onaga and I support SB 2214 allowing educational opportunities for all First-to-Work clients. I am a former Bridge-to-Hope (BTH) participant who graduated in December with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. I will work fulltime as a nurse at Queens once I pass my licensing exam in February. I am successfully transitioning off First-to-Work as soon as I receive my first fulltime paycheck.

Attending school while being a single mom raising an 8 month old daughter seemed like a huge risk. I would have to discontinue my full-time job, my only source of income and health insurance to attend school for one year to satisfy my prerequisites without any guarantee that I would be accepted into the competitive Nursing Program. However, I believed that had I not taken those risks, I would be stuck in dead end, unfulfilling jobs for the rest of my life.

When I went to the Department of Human Services for assistance, they required students to fulfill a 20 hour week; 12 credit hours and 8 working hours. I felt like this was reasonable but finding a part time job is not always easy, especially considering the time used to get from place to place. So my first plan was to find an on-campus job to eliminate some of these obstacles. That is when I contacted Bridge to Hope. The great thing about my BTH job is that they are flexible of when I can accomplish my 8 hours of work. I feel like I am contributing to the office with my assistance. On-campus employment has helped me to succeed in school.

For me, receiving an education goes beyond a degree or a title. It gives me **self-esteem**, it enables me to **hope**, and it grants me **opportunities** that would otherwise not be available. Two years ago, I never imagined that I could be a Nurse. Now I can see myself being a part of improving the health care system for generations to come. School has helped me to go from nothing, to something, to envisioning GREAT things. I feel lucky to be able to continue pursuing my dreams because I am grandfathered into the original program.

Many of my fellow BTH students and I have broken a vicious cycle and will be the start to a productive cycle. It seems to me that an ideal candidate for temporary assistance is a single parent going to school. I am appreciative of the support from DHS and from Bridge to Hope. I have been able to succeed in school, achieve personal and professional goals, and most importantly be a good mom. All First-to-Work clients should have this option available to them.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Kory L. Onaga
2820 Park Street Honolulu HI 96817

testimony

From: Joel Fischer [jfischer@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2008 2:10 PM
To: testimony
Subject: SB2214; Ways and means; 2/22; 11AM; Rm 211

SB 2214, Relating to Bridge to Hope
Ways and Means; Chair, Sen Baker

PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.

With the new Draconian and anti-education rules that the Feds are applying to programs like Bridge to Hope, the only thing we can count on is the State Legislature's willingness to stand up for the rights of welfare recipients to improve their lives through education. This important bill will do just that.

Thank you for supporting the Bridge to Hope program.

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW
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

Committee: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing Date: February 22, 2008
Hearing Time: 11:00 a.m.
Location: Conference Room 211

RE: SB 2214, SD1 Relating to Bridge to HOpe

Aloha Members of the Committee,

Seven years ago I appeared here at the Legislature and testified in strong support for the Bridge to Hope program. Passage of that historic legislation was accomplished through the collaborative and collective efforts of members of the Legislature, the University of Hawaii, the Department of Human Services, the Welfare and Employment Rights Coalition (WERC), Hawaii Commission on the Status of Women, college students, community supporters, and welfare recipients. Today, I ask for your support in the passage of Senate Bill 2210 expanding Bridge to Hope for all First-to-Work clients.

During the early coalition building efforts for Bridge to Hope I participated in the process as a student of the University of Hawaii, as a member of WERC, and as a recipient of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). I was a single parent raising two teenaged children, a full-time student at UH pursuing my social work degree, struggling to fulfill the work requirements of the TANF program, and trying to find quality time to spend with my children. I was fortunate in that my Americorp service and social work practicum hours counted towards meeting the TANF work requirements.

Bridge to Hope was just a dream at that time. Other students found themselves in situations similar to mine in that we were often on shaky ground trying to find balance as a parent, person, and student, and having to fulfill the work requirements of the TANF program. There was never enough time in the day for all of our responsibilities, and it was often attention to our own selves that suffered as we placed the wellbeing of our children and success in school first. Many found they could not juggle all that was being asked of them, ended their dreams of a college degree, and chose instead to work in entry level jobs in order to meet the TANF work requirements. Where are these families today?

In 1999 I graduated from the University of Hawaii and was awarded my Bachelor of Social Work degree. My children and I continued to receive TANF assistance as I entered the graduate social work program at UH. As an Americorp volunteer in 1999, I was assigned to the Victim Witness Kokua Services program at the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney as a student intern.

My testimony seven years ago in support of the passage of the Bridge to Hope program was an emotional experience for me and for those with whom I had worked together with for Bridge to Hope. I testified that beginning April 2000 I would no longer be a student intern; I had been hired by the Prosecutor's office as a Victim Advocate with a starting salary that immediately took my family off of welfare, and much more significantly, out of poverty.

Bridge to Hope was a means to provide opportunities to single parents to obtain postsecondary education that could help families get off of welfare, out of poverty, and be self-sufficient. In June 2000, Bridge to Hope was enacted and funded. While I was not able to directly participate in the Bridge to Hope program, I am grateful that so many other single parents and their families have had the support available from the University of Hawaii system and the Department of Human Services so that they too could obtain a college education.

Federal legislation has changed work requirements for TANF recipients. Pursuit of a four-year or post-baccalaureate degree is no longer an option in fulfilling the mandated work requirements. The path has been extremely narrowed to the pursuit of only a two-year technical or vocational degree. If that were the only choice available to me seven years ago, I am sure my children and I would not be enjoying the same successes that we have today. My route out of poverty was my BSW – a four year degree. I recently left the Prosecutors office and am now employed with the state as a Social Worker. I received my Masters of Science in Criminal Justice Administration from Chaminade University in May 2007.

Having achieved a college education has been a positive impact not only for me but for my all of my children as well. Where are my children who were teenagers seven years ago? They are both thriving and successful in their separate endeavors: one in the honors program at a highly ranked university in the continental U.S. where college costs are covered mostly through hard-earned academic scholarships and grants; the other is gainfully self-employed and has traveled around the world. My two older children are happily married, have college educations, are loving and caring parents, homeowners, and are good people.

In my profession I see the adverse effects that poverty related factors have on families and children. Just as poverty can affect generations of families, so does success. Providing a single parent receiving TANF assistance the opportunity and support to pursue a college education is sound public policy. The positive effects ripple throughout the family and into the community. The impact is significant, far-reaching, and long-lasting. Together we can change that path of poverty into one of success and self-sufficiency. I ask for your support today in passing Senate Bill 2214 and ask that you do so as an investment in the future and well-being of our families and our community.

Mahalo.

Nora Schubert
1722 Makiki St. Apt. 504
Honolulu, HI 96822

Jeanne Y. Ohta

1016 A Hind Iuka Drive
Honolulu, HI 96821

February 22, 2008

To: Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
Senator Shan Tsutsui, Vice Chair
And Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

From: Jeanne Ohta

Re: SB 2214 SD1 Relating to Bridge to Hope Program
Hearing: February 22, 2008, 11:00 a.m., Room 211

Position: SUPPORT

Thank you for hearing this measure. I am testifying today in support of SB 2214 SD1 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.

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.

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

February 22, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **S.B. 2214, S.D. 1 - RELATING TO BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM**

Hearing: Friday, February 22, 2008; 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of S.B. 2214, S.D. 1, 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.