

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 11, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Maile S. L. Shimabukuro, Chair
House Committee on Human Services & Housing

FROM: Lillian B. Koller, Director

SUBJECT: **S.B. 2214, S.D.2 - RELATING TO BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM**

Hearing: Tuesday, March 11, 2008, 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, 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 S.B. 2214, S.D. 2, 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.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Human Services & Housing
March 11, 2008 at 8:30 a.m.

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

SB2214 SD2 Relating to the Bridge to Hope Program

Chair Shimabukuro, Vice Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i **supports SB2214 SD2** 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 Department 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 Department 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.



SB2214 SD2
RELATING TO THE BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM
Committee on Human Services & Housing

March 11, 2008

8:30 am

Room 329

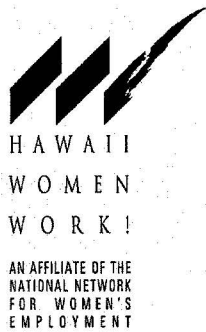
The Office of Hawaiian Affairs supports SB2214 SD2 to expand the Bridge to Hope Program to enable all heads of households receiving financial assistance and participating in the First-to-Work Program to pursue education beyond the federal limit of one-year of vocational education.

The Bridge to Hope Program is vital in decreasing poverty and encouraging self-sufficiency. In 2002, Native Hawaiians accounted for 32% of the Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF) and the Temporary Assistance to Other Needy Families participants (TAONF) in Hawai`i. Again in 2002, Native Hawaiians accounted close to 45% of the First-To-Work clients in the state of Hawai`i.

If Bridge to Hope Programs were non-existent it would be near to impossible to alleviate poverty as well as offer hope in a economically despair situation. Families, particularly single-female headed households are at-risk for staying in poverty for a longer period of time. A college education can increase self-esteem, offer hope, take part in mentoring and fostering capable individuals, and secure financial wealth.

The passage of HB 2770, HD1 will allow all heads of households participating in the First-to-Work program to further increase the range of educational activities and clarify the eligibility requirements of its participants.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to present testimony.



2600 Campus Rd. QLCSS #211
Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone: (808) 956-8059
Fax: (808) 956-9314

Date: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. ,Karl Rhoads Vice-Chair

From: Barbara Tavares

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

I write in **support of SB 2214,SD2** 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.

Date: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads, Vice-Chair

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

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

My name is Christine Quemuel and I **strongly support SB 2214, SD2** 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, SD2 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: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. ,Karl Rhoads Vice-Chair

From: Teresa Bill, Univ. Hawai'i Bridge to Hope Coordinator
Ph: 221-9261

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329 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 SD2** 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.

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 SD2 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.



For Tues, Mar 11, 2008
House HSH
8:30 am

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

March 9, 2008

TO: Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
And members of the House Human Services and Housing Committee

FROM: Debbie Shimizu, LSW
National Association of Social Workers, Hawaii (NASW)
Welfare and Employment Rights Coalition (WERC)

RE: SB 2214 SD2 Relating to Bridge to Hope Program- **STRONG SUPPORT**

Chair Shimabukuro and members of the House Human Services and 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. 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.

No money is being requested but technical amendments are needed. We support the amendments suggested by the Bridge to Hope program.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

TO: Representative Maile S.L. Shimabukuro, Chair
Representative Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair
Committee on Human Services and Housing

FROM: Jill Araki, Direct Services Manager
Domestic Violence Action Center
P.O. Box 3198
Honolulu, HI 96801
(808) 534-0040

HEARING: March 11, 2008 at 8:30 a.m.

RE: Support of S.B. 2214, S.D. 2, Relating to the Bridge to Hope Program

I am the Direct Services Manager at the Domestic Violence Action Center and have been working in the field of domestic violence for about eighteen years. I manage five of our Advocacy Programs designed to provide outreach and long-term case management to the survivors fleeing battering relationships. The Domestic Violence Action Center is a private, non-profit agency dedicated to helping survivors of domestic violence become safe and self-sufficient through advocacy, legal services, and community organization and education. The Domestic Violence Action Center strongly supports S.B. No. 2214, S.D. 2 which would expand educational opportunities for Bridge to Hope participants and promote economic self-sufficiency.

Many of the survivors our Agency works with are making \$30,000 or less annually to support themselves and/or their children. After fleeing an abusive relationship with a limited salary, many survivors struggle to support themselves and/or their children and are typically faced with decisions like whether to pay for rent or food. In addition, because many batterers isolate their partners from opportunities that can improve their financial status and make them economically independent and self-sufficient, many survivors are kept from reaching their full economic potential. The isolation ranges from denying the survivor an education to denying the survivor the ability to keep a job. After fleeing an abusive relationship, economic self-sufficiency is the key to a survivor's safety and the children's safety. If the survivors can support themselves and/or their children, they may not be forced to return to the batterer. Faced with a choice between their hungry children or physical violence, many survivors will choose the welfare of their children over their own welfare.

Our Agency has referred our clients to the Bridge to Hope Program and it is helpful to have this resource in our community for the safety of our clients. Since the Bridge to Hope Program is a pathway to economic self-sufficiency through expanded educational opportunities, the Bridge to Hope Program is really an opportunity for survivors of domestic violence to become safe. The Domestic Violence Action Center strongly urges the passage of S.B. 2214, S.D. 2. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
SB2214 SD2 - RELATING TO BRIDGE TO HOPE PROGRAM

March 11, 2008 at 8:30 a.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii hereby provides testimony to the Senate Committees on Education and Human Services & Public Housing on SB2214 SD2 – 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

Date: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads Vice-Chair

From: Ann Skipper Bridge to Hope Graduate

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

My name is Ann Skipper and I **strongly support SB 2214, SD2** 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: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads Vice-Chair

From: Angela Washington Former Bridge to Hope participant

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

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, SD2 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: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads Vice-Chair

From: Bonnie Godinez Kapiolani Community College Bridge to Hope Participant

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

Aloha. I am Bonnie Godinez and I strongly support SB 2214, SD2 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, SD2 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: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads Vice-Chair

From: Enjoli Rapozo-Hoskins Bridge to Hope graduate

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

I am Enjoli Rapozo-Hoskins and I **strongly support SB 2214, SD2** 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: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads Vice-Chair

From: Joelene Cruz Former Bridge to Hope participant

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

I am Joelene Cruz and I **strongly support SB 2214, SD2** 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: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads Vice-Chair

From: Kahealani Wright Former Bridge to Hope Student at UH-Hilo

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

Aloha, my name is Kahealani Wright and I strongly support SB 2214, SD2 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, SD2. Please support this bill.

Kahealani Wright
858A Kupulau Road
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

-----Original Message-----

From: Joel Fischer [mailto:jfischer@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Saturday, March 08, 2008 1:56 PM
To: HSHtestimony
Subject: SB2214; 3/11; 8:30AM; Rm 329
Importance: High

SB 2214, SD2, Relating to Bridge to Hope
HSH; Chair, Rep Shimabukuro

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

Date: March 7, 2008

To: HOUSE COMMITTEE on HUMAN SERVICES & HOUSING
Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads Vice-Chair

From: Kory Onaga Bridge to Hope Graduate

Re: SB2214, SD2 relating to Bridge to Hope
Tues. March 11, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

I am Kory Leinani Onaga and I support SB 2214, SD2 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. 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.

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