

Representative Josh Green, Chair
Representative John Mizuno, Vice-Chair
Committee on Health
Elizabeth Kuulei Bell

LATE
Testimony

Wednesday, March 12, 2008

Support of SB 3228, Relating to Adjusting the Annual Pensions of Retired Patient Employees at Hansen's Disease Facilities

I am Elizabeth Kuulei Bell, and I am one of the patients of Kalaupapa. I strongly support SB 3228, Relating to Adjusting the Annual Pensions of Retired Patient Employees at Hansen's Disease Facilities. I am testifying for myself and also on behalf of the other patients of Kalaupapa.

I hope that you will keep an open mind and also an open heart when deciding on the issue of the Kalaupapa Pension. I want to give you a brief history of my life and how I requested to work for the state to earn an income since I had no money and I was isolated from my family due to having Hansen's Disease formerly know as Leprosy. We were forced to stay at Kalihi Hospital, and then we were sent to Hale Mohalu Hospital, Pearl City. It was at Hale Mohalu Hospital that I got my first job as a food server. I then worked as a janitor working in the tool shop, cleaning the recreation hall, and cleaning the theatre. I then worked as a dressing nurse. I was then sent to Kalaupapa, where I continued to work for the state as an office clerk, a gardener, and a seamstress making pajamas for the blind and handicapped patients. I also worked in the dining room, and in the hospital where I worked as an orderly, and as a dressing nurse. Since my husband needed dialysis, I also helped the nurses in hooking up patients to the dialysis machine. In order to get a better pay, I decided to be the first police woman in Kalaupapa and earn \$.70 an hour, which at that time was the highest paying job in Kalaupapa.

I am here today requesting your consideration to have our pension increased. We have not received an increase for many years, so I feel we deserve a raise in our pension and deserve to have it increased every year. There are only 27 of us left in Kalaupapa and many of us are not in the best of health.

I urge the committee to pass SB3228. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Much Mahalo,



Elizabeth Kuulei Bell

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Representative Josh Green, Chair
Representative John Mizuno, Vice-Chair
Committee on Health
Shoichi Hamai

LATE
Testimony

Wednesday, March 12, 2008

Support of SB 3228, Relating to Adjusting the Annual Pensions of Retired Patient Employees at Hansen's Disease Facilities.

I am Shoichi Hamai, and I am a Hansen's Disease patient. I have been living in Kalaupapa for the past 66 years.

I was 14 years old when I was sent to Kalihi Hospital where I first worked for the state as a hospital janitor, and as a hospital dispensary assistant for \$12.00 a month. Even as a youngster, without any family, we still needed spending money. In 1941, I was sent to Kalaupapa Settlement. There I worked as part of the nursery gang, cleaning the sides of the road for \$0.25 an hour for 4 hours a day or \$1.00 a day since at that time there were no minimum wage. As years passed there were better job openings, so I worked as an ice house helper, carpenter helper and store clerk. During this time my pay was increased to \$.40 an hour. I finally worked as a Police man which earned one of the top wages in the settlement, which was \$.70 per hour. It wasn't until much later that the state found out that every employee should have been paid minimum wage. Unfortunately this was realized too late and only a few of the patients were still employed and able to earn the minimum wage of \$5.25 an hour. When they retired, their pension were more than double of what the other pensioners had due to the low wage scale.


According to SB 3228, the pensioners earning below \$4,000.00 will have a 5% increase, that will amount to \$200.00 a year or approximately \$17.00 per month. Pensioners earning over \$5,000.00 will have a 4% raise, increase will amount to \$200.00 a year, approximately \$17.00 per month, and the 3rd bracket for \$6,000.00 will have a 2-1/2% raise, which will amount to \$150.00 a year and \$13.00 per month.

Total pay raise according to SB3228 will cost the state approximately \$3,000.00 a year and in 10 years it will cost the state \$30,000.00. Our pensioners are all at the age of 80 and above, and I don't think we will be living another 10 years. We lost 2 pensioners since last year July, so I urge you members of the Health Committee to please pass this bill SB3228, so the remaining pensioners can enjoy the increase. I would like to thank you for the 2nd increase in 2008 which is 2-1/2% across the board which is included on SB 3228.

If I do not make any sense to you, please accept my sincere apology, and thank you for being patient and listening to my testimony.

May you all have a nice day.

Aloha,


Shoichi Hamai

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