

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND LABOR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

February 8, 2008
9:00 A.M.
Conference Room 016

**TESTIMONY ON S.B. 3228
RELATING TO ADJUSTING THE ANNUAL PENSIONS OF RETIRED PATIENT
EMPLOYEES AT HANSEN'S DISEASE FACILITIES**

By

Patrick Boland

Good morning Chair's Taniguchi and Ige. I am testifying in support of this bill.

I am Patrick Boland, a long time friend of Kalaupapa.

Last year these same pension increases were included in the budget bill. However, the Attorney General found that there was a defect in the language and the money was not released. This bill merely amends existing statute to enable the increases.

There are very few patients still at Kalaupapa, with only 27 people being on the list of patients eligible to live there. When they were originally sent to Kalaupapa, they were compelled to surrender their freedom for the benefit of the rest of society. Nevertheless they contributed to the community, working at patient jobs, and always earning less than minimum wage. It is a simple matter of justice to give them these small increases in their pensions.

Indeed, the Legislature already determined the merit of these raises when it made the appropriation last year.

I urge that you pass this bill and I thank the Senators who have been so consistent in their compassionate support of the Kalaupapa community.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Friday, February 8, 2008
State Capitol – Room 016
9:00 AM

TESTIMONY: **SB 3228**

**Relating to Adjusting the Annual Pensions of Retired Patient
Employees at Hansen's Disease Facilities**

To: Committee on Judiciary and Labor
 Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
 Senator Clayton Hee, Vice-Chair

Committee on Health
 Senator David Ige, Chair
 Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice-Chair

From: Wally Inglis

Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and Members:

I wish to express to you today my strong support for Senate Bill 3228, regarding pensions for retired patient employees of Hansen's Disease facilities.

If ever there was a group of people deserving whatever benefits the State of Hawaii can bestow, the residents and former residents of Kalaupapa should be at the top of any list. These individuals have not only suffered the effects of Hansen's Disease, but also the pain of enforced separation from family and friends. In spite of these obstacles, many of them—in their capacity as state employees—have served members of their immediate community as well as all of Hawaii's people.

Over the past twenty-five years, through contact with residents of both Hale Mohalu in Pearl and Kalaupapa, I have come to know and respect a number of these retired patient employees. Many have since passed away. Those who are still with us deserve to receive whatever compensation is justly due them.

The adjustments and increases are, at best, minimal. Looked at from a purely monetary standpoint, they will not improve the financial situations of the retirees in a major way. But they will make a difference, however small. Most importantly, passage of this bill will make a statement—a statement of appreciation for the many contributions to the State of Hawaii by an important and dedicated group of people.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer my testimony.

Valerie Monson
175 Kealaloa Avenue
Makawao, Hawaii 96768
valerimonson@yahoo.com

Feb. 8, 2008

Chairman Brian Taniguchi
Vice Chairman Clayton Hee
Senate Judiciary and Labor Committee

Hearing: 9 am, February 8, 2008, Conference Room 16

Re: Support of SB3228, relating to raising the pensions of Hansen's disease patients at Kalaupapa

Dear Chairman Taniguchi, Vice Chairman Hee and members of the Judiciary and Labor Committee:

I am writing in support of SB 3228, which would raise the pensions of the Kalaupapa patients who worked so hard at their jobs for so many years, yet were severely underpaid.

In their younger years, the patients made up a bulk of the workforce at Kalaupapa: they were hospital orderlies, attendants who helped with dressings and preparation of bandages, police officers, carpenters, food service helpers, truck drivers, laborers, office workers, trail workers and more. These were not easy jobs – they required employees who were responsible and capable with the ability to handle difficult tasks. The Sisters of St. Francis, who provided the nurses at Kalaupapa for many years, have told me how they could not have gotten along at the hospital without the assistance of the skilled patients who were orderlies and attendants.

And, yet, most of the patients were paid extremely low wages – some people who began working in the 1940s have said they were paid as little as \$1 a day. In the mid-1980s, a group of patients was represented by the American Civil Liberties Union to get them some back pay because they had been so poorly paid. From what I understand, they have never received any cost-of-living adjustments to their pensions.

The reason the people of Kalaupapa received such unfair wages was most likely because they were subjected to numerous injustices because they were diagnosed with leprosy. They were often referred to as "inmates" even though they were not guilty of any crimes.

We all know that the people of Kalaupapa were forced to leave their families to be isolated on the peninsula of Kalaupapa because of society's fear of leprosy. They have paid the ultimate price by willingly leaving their families to supposedly protect the general public – and later giving up their children to be raised by others.

While it is true that the patients get free housing, food, utilities and other benefits from the Department of Health, these same amenities are made available at no charge to today's Health Department workers who are also paid much higher wages and who will receive a much higher pension. This is not a criticism of today's workers – many of them are a beloved part of the community – but the patients are simply asking for equal treatment.

Please pass SB3228 and give the people of Kalaupapa what is fairly due them.

With aloha,



Valerie Monson

LATE

CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378
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In reply, please refer to:
File:

Senate Health Committee

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

Testimony of Chiyome Leinaala Fukino, M.D.
Director of Health

February 8, 2008, 9:00 a.m.

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health supports this bill that would increase the Kalaupapa
2 patients' pensions.

3 **Fiscal Implications:** Act 213/07 appropriated general funds for adjustments in pensions for Kalaupapa
4 Settlement patient pensioners (FY 08 - \$4,243 and FY 09 - \$2, 708.) As long as the statutes are
5 amended to allow these pension adjustments, the pension increases can be paid utilizing the above
6 appropriated funds for FY 08 and FY 09. As for the out years, since this would be an on-going expense,
7 the \$2,708 should not be taken out as a non-recurring expense when our base budget for the upcoming
8 biennium budget preparation is calculated. However, we would need to address the difference between
9 the estimated \$5,039 and the \$2,708 for FY 10 and beyond.

10 **Purpose and Justification:** The Kalaupapa patient pensioners are not under the State's Employee
11 Retirement System (ERS) and therefore do not receive the annual cost of living increases as do the other
12 state pensioners. Separate and specific statutory language is required to increase their pension amounts.
13 The last increase to the Kalaupapa patients' pensions occurred in 1990. In 2002, a one time lump sum
14 bonus of \$200 was given to all the Kalaupapa patient pensioners who had at least 20 years of service and
15 was at least 70 years old or older.

1 The long intervals between pension increases for the Kalaupapa pensioners combined with their
2 advancing age make it imperative that legislation is enacted as soon as possible to get the increased
3 pensions to the Kalaupapa patients.
4 Thank you for this opportunity to testify.