

HB 739



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MĀNOA

April 5, 2009

Senator Donna Mercado-Kim, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Members of the WAM Committee
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: HB 739, Relating to TANF

Dear Senator Mercado-Kim:

I am Gail Breakey, Executive Director of the Hawaii Family Support Institute testifying in support of HB 739, which provides for use of TANF funding for a range of needed child welfare services, including to continue TANF funding for the Healthy Start program and Enhanced Healthy Start.

Healthy Start is a public health approach to preventing child abuse and neglect, and promoting healthy development among infants and toddlers at risk for abuse and poor developmental outcomes. The program is unique and unduplicated in that it screens all families of newborns pre-natally or at birth in hospitals across the state and enrolls those at risk and in need of support on a voluntary basis into the Healthy Start program in their community. Home visiting programs provide a range of family support services to strengthen family parenting capacity and improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

- **It is the only program in Hawaii that reaches out to families providing help right from the start, before abuse or neglect occurs.** Other services are provided after problems have started.
- **It addresses risk factors to reduce risk and improve parenting capacity.**
- With additional economic stresses on already overburdened families, **this safety net for our most vulnerable infants and toddlers needs to be restored.**

There are many reasons why Healthy Start is important and needs to be restored.

1. Healthy Start (HS) is effective in averting abuse, strengthening families and child development.

- **Out of 4,000 high risk families served in 2009, only one HS target child was confirmed by CPS for abuse;** other reports were primarily for threatened harm as an alert and to bring in additional resources for the families.
- Children are much safer with home visitors in the home. Potentially dangerous situations are spotted early before abuse occurs or escalates into more serious problems.

2. Healthy Start is cost effective. The Department of Human Services currently estimates that child welfare related costs for high risk families not served preventively are about \$783,888 per family, some studies show higher estimates. **If there had been no Healthy Start services in 2008, short term costs would total at least twice the annual cost of the program.**

3. Healthy Start is critical to development of human capital. The science of early childhood shows that early intervention services like Healthy Start are critically important in assuring that dis-advantaged, high risk young children do not have adverse early experiences and that they arrive at school healthy and ready to learn.

Services like Healthy Start are critical to both reduction in social and economic costs of social and health problems and also to development of human capital **Early childhood experts and economists agree that children are our greatest resource and must be protected.**

Enhanced Healthy Start serves families with very young children after a report has been made to child welfare. The program has multi-disciplinary staff to work on treatment issues of families who usually have substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health issues. **Unlike Healthy Start, this program does not have screening capability to reach out to families pro-actively at birth.** Enhanced Healthy Start services are provided within the same agencies as Healthy Start. **Enhanced Healthy Start has been successful in helping to keep young children safe in their homes and out of foster care.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. I hope that you will agree that investing in our most vulnerable infants and toddlers is a critical function and that TANF funding for Healthy Start and Enhanced Healthy Start should be continued.

Sincerely,

Gail Breakey, Executive Director
Hawaii Family Support Institute

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Testimony on HB 739 -RELATING TO TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Chair: Sen. Donna Mercado Kim Vice-Chair: Sen. Shan S. Tsutsui
By Howard S. Garval, MSW, President & CEO, Child & Family Service
April 6, 2009, 9:30 a.m., Room 211

Two of our most critical societal problems are child abuse and domestic violence. There is strong evidence that in economic downturns the rates of child abuse and family violence increase at a time when the resources to both prevent and treat these problems actually decrease. This is the “perfect storm” and a scary proposition that Hawaii faces as government grapples with a sizeable deficit in the state budget.

I am Howard Garval, President and CEO of Child & Family Service, Hawaii’s oldest and largest human service organization that touches the lives of over 40,000 of Hawaii’s people each year. We provide a comprehensive continuum of services from child abuse prevention, family strengthening services, domestic violence intervention, services to help youth overcome a variety of emotional and behavioral problems, and programs that help our Kupuna to thrive in the community as long as possible and that provide support to their caregivers.

Child & Family Service supports HB 739 because it preserves services to families that help them stay in tact. With decreasing state funds, everything possible should be done to access alternative funds including Federal reimbursement like TANF. While last session the Legislature was concerned about protecting enough TANF funds in the reserve for cash assistance, the proposed use of TANF funds in HB 739 protects enough reserves for cash assistance and still continues to support services that meet the other three TANF purposes other than direct cash assistance: 2) Employment training programs to help families become self-sufficient; 3) Teen pregnancy education and prevention; and 4) Services that keep the family unit in tact.

Perhaps the best way to make the case for HB 739 is to look at what would happen if the TANF funded services go away. At Child & Family Service we already have experienced a 12% cut in FY 09 as part of the Department of Human Services’ across-the-board cut to all TANF funded programs. This was the Administration’s response to the Legislature’s restriction of \$27.6 million to build up the cash reserve for cash assistance. This meant cuts to such child abuse prevention programs as Enhanced Healthy Start and Family Strengthening Services, reductions in funding for Domestic Violence Advocacy for TANF recipients who get a waiver from work requirements because of domestic violence, and reductions in teen pregnancy prevention. Without such services, the likelihood is great that incidents of child abuse and domestic violence will increase even without the likely increase due to the worsening economy. This will



destabilize/disintegrate more families and the human, social, and financial costs to our community will be substantial.

Of course, another important reality has been missing in the discussion about cutting programs. For nonprofit organizations that have already trimmed budgets to the bare essentials, the loss of these TANF funds will mean significant additional layoffs that cannot be helpful to our economy. Some of those laid off employees could end up needing TANF benefits if they cannot find employment.

I urge you to pass HB 739 that will preserve critical and essential services to our most vulnerable populations in Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to present my testimony to you today.



Sen WAM Cmte
Mon, Apr 6, 2009
9:30 am
room 211

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

April 4, 2009

TO: Senator Donna Kim, Chair
Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee

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

RE: HB 739 HD2, SD1 Relating To Temporary Assistance to Needy Families- **SUPPORT**

Chair Kim and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, I am Debbie Shimizu, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Hawaii Chapter. I am also a member of the Financial Assistance Advisory Council (FAAC) of DHS and the Welfare and Employment Rights Coalition (WERC). **NASW supports HB 739 HD2, SD1.**

As the economy worsens, the safety net is needed even more. Government must assist vulnerable individuals and families meet their basic shelter, food and health care needs and support their return to the workforce. The middle class may also be losing their jobs, housing and suffering economic dislocation as a result of the recession, so TANF funds must also be used to help prevent the middle class from falling into poverty. In this time of economic struggle the health and human services sector needs to remain strong to help those who are in need of assistance.

We urge the Senate to support the use of these federal funds for the purposed proposed in HB 739 HD2, SD1.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

kim4 - Elizabeth

From: Joel Fischer [jfischer@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Saturday, April 04, 2009 2:22 PM
To: WAM Testimony
Subject: HB739;WAM;4/6/09;9:30AM;Rm211

Importance: High

HB739, HD2, SB1, Relating to TANF
WAM; Chair, Sen Mercado-Kim

PLEASE PASS THIS BILL.

This bill is an almost automatic pass, I suppose, but I am especially supporting the caring way it was written. We all have clear recognition of the hardships people are facing now. Understanding, though, how difficult these times are for our most vulnerable citizens -those receiving public cash assistance- requires extraordinary empathy.

I am writing in support of this bill and its language as my way of requesting that we keep the needs of the vulnerable always in mind, and oppose any pressures to reduce their benefits.

Thank you.

Aloha, joel

Dr. Joel Fischer, ACSW
President, 19-3, Democratic Party

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