
HOUSE RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO STOP ITS PROPOSED REORGANIZATION OF THE BENEFITS, ENMPLOYMENT, SUPPORT SERVICES AND MED QUEST DIVISIONS UNTIL A LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE EVALUATES THE PROPOSAL.

1 WHEREAS, the Department of Human Services (DHS) oversees a
2 variety of important social service programs, including
3 Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, food stamps, general
4 assistance and Medicaid, that serve thousands of people in
5 Hawaii; and

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7 WHEREAS, DHS proposes to reorganize its Benefits,
8 Employment Support Services Division (BESSD), Med-Quest
9 Division, Social Services Division, including but not limited to
10 the intake and eligibility determination functions for public
11 assistance, SNAP, Medicaid and Foster Care Income Maintenance,
12 and create a new Eligibility Division to save money and
13 streamline operations; and

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15 WHEREAS, the proposed reorganization would close 31
16 eligibility offices which equate to 50 units statewide and
17 replace them with two processing centers in Honolulu and Hilo to
18 handle all applications and the work previously done in local
19 offices; and

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21 WHEREAS, under the proposed reorganization BESSD and Med-
22 Quest employees would have no direct contact with clients
23 because all communication would be by phone, fax, and e-mail;
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26 WHEREAS, at least 232 DHS employees would be laid off as a
27 result of this proposal, and the proposed changes come as more
28 residents are struggling in the recession and people are turning
29 to social welfare for help; and
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1 WHEREAS, there have been increases in the number of people
2 on welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, and child care subsidies
3 during the current recession; and

4 WHEREAS, this reorganization will likely result in fewer
5 people receiving benefits and hurt those greatest in need
6 because they are the elderly, disabled or mentally ill, or do
7 not have access to computers or fax machines; and

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9 WHEREAS, clients may not be able to reach an eligibility
10 worker by phone because of short staffing caused by the massive
11 reduction-in-force last year; and

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13 WHEREAS, it is doubtful that non-profit social service
14 organizations can assist if there are problems with this policy
15 proposal since they are already struggling to serve their
16 existing clients; and

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18 WHEREAS, a reduction in force to the DHS Office of
19 Investigations will increase the rate of unreported cases of
20 welfare fraud; and

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22 WHEREAS, it is urged DHS be prohibited from hiring private
23 contractors and vendors for intake and eligibility of welfare
24 services; and

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26 WHEREAS, DHS claims that the reorganization is based on
27 successful models in other states such as Florida; yet we find
28 troubling reports about service provision from these states
29 including Florida; and

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31 WHEREAS, a policy change of this complexity and magnitude
32 should be carefully evaluated before implementation, especially
33 in the last several months of the administration; now,
34 therefore,

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36 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
37 Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
38 of 2010, that before the implementation of the proposed
39 reorganization of DHS, a Task Force be established consisting of
40 the following; DHS Director or designee; an eligibility worker
41 from each island from the BESSD, Social Services Division, and



1 Med-Quest Division; a representative from the Fraud
2 Investigation Unit of DHS; a representative from HGEA; the House
3 Chair of the Committee on Human Services; the Senate Chair of
4 the Committee on Human Services; a representative from the
5 United States Department of Agriculture; and

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7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force conduct a
8 thorough evaluation of the proposed reorganization that include
9 but are not limited to the following issues:

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11 1. What the effect this proposal will have on current
12 clients considering Hawaii's unique geography and multi-
13 cultural society; and
14 2. Whether benefit payments will be wrongly denied or
15 delayed under this proposal; and
16 3. What specific information technology will be used to
17 implement this proposal and how much it will cost; and
18 4. When will DHS staff be trained in the technology; and
19 5. Any and all other matters that the United States
20 Department of Agriculture normally undertake as necessary
21 or appropriate to evaluate a major policy proposal; and

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23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DHS, its staff, and other
24 relevant persons or agencies are requested to cooperate with and
25 assist the Legislative Task Force, and to provide information
26 requested by the Legislative Task Force; and

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28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that no funds shall be expended
29 towards any reorganization until the Task Force submit the
30 findings and recommendations of the reorganization proposal to
31 the Legislature no later than 20 days prior to the convening of
32 the Regular Session of 2011; and

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34 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings and
35 recommendations of the Task Force be submitted to the United
36 States Department of Agriculture to determine possible concerns
37 or potential violations with federal regulations or policy; and

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39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
40 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, the Director of Human
41 Services, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the



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1 President of the Senate, and members of Hawaii's congressional
2 delegation.

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OFFERED BY:

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Du Brown

MAR 09 2010

