

JAN 20 2010

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO FUNDING FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEX ASSAULT
SERVICES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that even during these
2 difficult economic times, cuts in funding for domestic violence
3 and sexual assault services should be avoided where possible.
4 This is particularly true because downturns in the economy
5 increase the need for these services, and a lack of funding may
6 eliminate the only chance to reach and help a crime victim.

7 Funding for domestic violence and sexual assault, however,
8 has recently suffered deep budget cuts. During the last fiscal
9 year, the judiciary cut thirty per cent of its budget for
10 domestic violence programs, representing a \$600,000 reduction.
11 The affected services include legal services, court outreach,
12 advocacy and case management services, support groups, and
13 community outreach. These cuts were made at a time when the
14 need for these services is more urgent than ever. Recession-
15 related domestic violence is on the rise across the nation due
16 to increased unemployment and financial strain on families. Job
17 loss and declines in income add even more strain on violent



1 relationships. Hotline calls, shelter visits, and domestic
2 violence-related crimes have increased significantly, according
3 to recent reports. A study on recent domestic-violence
4 homicides in Massachusetts found that "limited access to
5 services for victims and unemployment for batterers" were key
6 risk factors of abuse. Loss of funding for domestic violence
7 services during periods of economic crisis, when services are
8 needed more than ever, is simply unconscionable.

9 Moreover, during the last fiscal year, the department of
10 the attorney general cut twenty per cent of its budget for sex
11 assault programs, representing a \$400,000 reduction in crisis,
12 ongoing counseling, and prevention education services to sexual
13 assault victims, who include men, women, and children. These
14 services to victims include telephone crisis response for
15 counseling, referral and information, long-term in-person crisis
16 counseling, legal systems advocacy, crisis counseling,
17 prevention education, and outreach and case management services
18 to coordinate ongoing care and encourage participation in
19 therapy. As with the domestic violence services, although
20 funding has been radically cut, the demand for services has
21 increased considerably. During the past year, there has been a
22 significant increase in the number of sex assault victims



1 seeking emergency medical assistance. On the Big Island, crisis
2 calls have increased by twenty-five per cent. On Maui and
3 Kauai, the sex assault programs have waiting lists for therapy
4 due to increased demand. Victims may be unable to obtain
5 services privately, due to the affects of the recession.
6 Providers have seen a sixty per cent increase in the number of
7 sex assault victims seeking counseling who have little or no
8 means to pay for these services. Additionally, sex assault
9 service providers are seeing more clients who have lost their
10 jobs and health benefits, and who cannot afford to continue in
11 treatment. Because of cuts to other mental health programs,
12 there has been an increase in the number of clients with
13 significant, multiple mental health issues who may not be
14 appropriate for sex assault services, but who are nonetheless
15 being referred to the sex assault programs for lack of a more
16 appropriate program to refer them to. Access to affordable and
17 appropriate crisis intervention and counseling services is
18 critical to provide victims with immediate and long-term
19 counseling and support, and cutting funding for such programs
20 leaves victims vulnerable to difficulties in interpersonal
21 relationships and the use of maladaptive coping mechanisms,
22 which may include substance abuse, eating disorders,



1 prostitution, indiscriminate sexual behavior, and self-
2 mutilation.

3 The purpose of this Act is to restore funding for domestic
4 violence and sexual assault services to fiscal year 2008-2009
5 levels.

6 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
7 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
8 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2010-2011 to
9 restore funding for services relating to domestic violence to
10 fiscal year 2008-2009 levels.

11 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the judiciary for
12 the purposes of this Act.

13 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
14 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
15 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2010-2011 to
16 restore funding for services relating to sexual assault to
17 fiscal year 2008-2009 levels.

18 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
19 the attorney general for the purposes of this Act.

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1 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2010.

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Report Title:

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services; Department of the Attorney General; Judiciary; Appropriation

Description:

Restores cuts in funding for domestic violence and sexual assault services to fiscal year 2008-2009 levels. Appropriates funds to the department of the attorney general for sexual assault services and to the judiciary for domestic violence services.

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