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THE TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE  
INTERIM OF 2009

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NOTICE OF JOINT INFORMATIONAL BRIEFING

DATE:      Thursday, October 15, 2009  
TIME:      12:30 p.m.  
PLACE:      Conference Room 329  
                 State Capitol  
                 415 South Beretania Street

A G E N D A

The purpose of this informational briefing is review Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division, under the Department of Human Services. The focus will be on services for the blind under the Ho'opono program.

Vocational Rehabilitation is a State-Federal partnership program that provides services to help people with physical or mental impairments to attain successful employment outcomes.

The Ho'opono Program provides services to the blind. The program's goal is to enable visually impaired adults attain maximum vocational and functional independence with its team of skilled professionals providing varied services to meet the participant's individual needs.

Under the Randolph-Sheppard Vending Stand Act<sup>1</sup> it is intended to "provide blind persons with remunerative employment, enlarge the economic opportunities of the blind, and stimulate the blind to greater efforts in striving to make themselves self-supporting."

The Ho'opono program is one of the most successful programs in the country, with graduates from the program securing approximately \$20 per hour in employment wages in Hawaii (according to advocates this is the highest rate in the country). However, Ho'opono participants and advocates for the blind have suggested that four positions under the program will be abolished and eight others eliminated via reduction in force. The abolished positions are as follows: One rehabilitation – communication skills teacher, one counselor position, one

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<sup>1</sup> 20 U.S.C. Sec. 107

vocational rehabilitation specialist position and one employment specialist position. According to the advocates for the blind, the abolished positions are mostly funded with federal funds on a percentage basis. Finally, advocates for the blind and disabled have asserted that the visually impaired in Hawaii want to contribute to their community by being employed and being tax paying citizens thus helping Hawaii's economy. However, should these positions be eliminated, the services for the Ho'opono program will be severely affected and many believe this would lead to more visually impaired relying on state and federal assistance rather than being gainfully employed. A review of the significant impact as well as the adverse consequences, not only to the visually impaired, but also to the state, will be discussed.

Presenters will discuss the importance of the positions in question for Ho'opono and determine if such cost reducing measures are justified.

The following organizations or individuals have been invited to participate:

Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division and the Ho'opono Program

The Blind Vendors Association

Organizers of the White Cane Safety Awareness Day

Association for the Home Rehabilitation Teachers

Individual participants of Ho'opono

Other organizations or individuals representing the visually impaired.

In order to ensure adequate representation from each presenters, please limit testimony to five minutes.

**Only testimony from people on the testifiers list will be accepted.**

Persons on the testifiers list wishing to offer comments should submit testimony at least 24 hours prior to the hearing with a transmittal cover indicating:

- Testifier's name with position/title and organization;
- The Committee the comments are directed to;
- The date and time of the hearing;
- Measure number; and
- The number of copies the Committee is requesting.

While every effort will be made to copy, organize, and collate all testimony received, materials received on the day of the hearing or improperly identified or directed to the incorrect office, may be distributed to the Committee after the hearing.

Submit testimony in ONE of the following ways:

PAPER: One copy (including an original) to Room 315 in the State Capitol;

FAX: For comments less than 5 pages in length, transmit to 586-8524 (Oahu) or 1-800-535-3859 (Neighbor Islands); or

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EMAIL: For comments less than 5 pages in length, transmit to [HUS testimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:HUS testimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov).

Testimony submitted will be placed on the Legislative Web site after the hearing adjourns. This public posting of testimony on the Web site should be considered when including personal information in your testimony.

If you require special assistance or auxiliary aids and/or services to participate in the House public hearing process (i.e., sign or foreign language interpreter or wheelchair accessibility), please contact the Committee Clerk at 586-6050 or email your request for an interpreter to [HouseInterpreter@Capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:HouseInterpreter@Capitol.hawaii.gov) at least 24 hours prior to the hearing for arrangements. Prompt requests submitted help to ensure the availability of qualified individuals and appropriate accommodations.

For further information, please call the Committee Clerk at 586-6050.

Selected meetings are broadcast live. Check the current legislative broadcast schedule on the "Capitol TV" Web site at [www.capitoltv.org](http://www.capitoltv.org) OR call 550-8074.

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Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland  
Chair

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Representative John M. Mizuno  
Chair

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Senator Colleen Hanabusa  
Senate President

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Representative Calvin K.Y. Say  
Speaker of the House