



House HUS Committee
Monday, Jan 25, 2010
8:30 am
Room 329

National Association of Social Workers

Hawaii Chapter

January 24, 2010

TO: Representative John Mizuno, Chair
Members of the House Human Services Committee

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

RE: HB 1914 Relating to Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force (EOPR)

Chair Mizuno and members of the House Human Services 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. NASW is the largest professional organization for social workers in Hawaii.

NASW supports HB 1914 establishing a joint legislative economic opportunity poverty reduction task force.

Thank you for proposing the creation of a task force to: 1) assess current state policies and practices; 2) study and evaluate evidence-based solutions to promote economic opportunity and poverty reduction in other states; and 3) develop a comprehensive plan in Hawaii with the goal of reducing the number of residents living in poverty by at least 50% by 2020.

During this time of economic crisis, the gap between the haves and have-nots is widening and more individuals are falling into poverty. Policy makers need to educate themselves on current state policies and practices as well as study what other states are doing. Without a comprehensive plan and goal, we will never reduce the number of our citizens living in poverty.

The EOPR is a nice "next step" to the work that the Hawaii Alliance for Community Based Economic Development has already started on asset building. I would like to ask that the EOPR task force incorporate the work and recommendations that the Asset Building Task Force just completed in 2009.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.