

The Twenty-Fifth Legislature, State of Hawaii
Hawaii State House of Representatives
Regular Session of 2010

Committee on Human Services
Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
Representative Tom Brower, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 11, 2010
9:30 am

Conference Room 329
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Testimony by
David Valencia, Eligibility Worker III
Department of Human Services, Med-QUEST
Division, Eligibility Branch, Maui Section

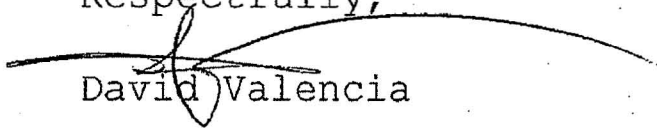
I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 2650. SD2, HD1 that would prohibit the use of private contracts and vendors for intake and eligibility of DHS welfare and public assistance services. It would also require the DHS to convene a task force to determine the feasibility of the EPOD reorganization **prior** to implementation. In reference to the EPOD reorganization I have stated that this Plan is not Pono for Hawaii; as it does not properly address the needs and services of our neediest clients. The proposed plan has not been reviewed or consulted by the current serving staff that has decades of experience and knowledge. I believe our great State of Hawaii has proved to be a superior example of how we care for members of our communities with compassion and the Aloha Spirit. Our state has been noted for being

progressive in providing health care and services to all segments of our society. This plan is not reorganization as it is billed but rather a changing of the paradigm of how we provide for our neediest citizens.

Director Koller has not shifted manpower resources between divisions to address increasing case loads for med-quest workers and has systematically ignored her branch administrators and unit supervisors on requests for assistance or recommendations for solutions. She has chosen to "import" a mainland concept of providing welfare benefits that is not contusive to our way of life. I support this measure as it allows an analysis of our Director of Human Services and proposed reorganization and gives all concerned parties a voice on the best way to go forward in being responsible to our beneficiaries.

Mahalo for your consideration, and allowing me to provide this testimony.

Respectfully,



David Valencia

brower1-Traci

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, March 10, 2010 9:39 AM
To: HUS testimony
Cc: karenkmuraoka@hotmail.com
Subject: Testimony for SB2650 on 3/11/2010 9:30:00 AM

Testimony for HUS/HLT 3/11/2010 9:30:00 AM SB2650

Conference room: 329
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Karen Muraoka
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: karenkmuraoka@hotmail.com
Submitted on: 3/10/2010

Comments:

I am in support of SB2650, SD2, HD1 Proposed, Part II, Sections 2 and 3 as a citizen of this State and employee of the Department of Human Services. It is our duty to insure a detailed plan and all infrastructures are in place before we make changes to the way applicants and clients receive services so that the needy, dependent and vulnerable members of our community will receive services in an efficient and expedient manner before we streamline operations. While I am against creation of another Task Force, as public servants, it is time and money well-spent to insure the proposed DHS reorganization plan is complete to avoid disservice to recipients, chaos in operations, potential violations of federal requirements and additional expenses to taxpayers. Thank you for your continued consideration and support of this bill.

LATE

Subject: **Re: EPOD proposal and SB2650, SD2, HD1a**

From: **anake_bridge@hawaiiintel.net**

Sent: **Tuesday, March 09, 2010 10:13:17 PM**

To: **anake_bridge@hawaiiintel.net**

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repawana@Capitol.hawaii.gov, repberg@Capitol.hawaii.gov,

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On Mar 9, 2010,

wrote:

March 8, 2010

Representative John Mizuno, HUS Chair,
30th Representative District
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 436
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

S.B. 2650 S.D.2
H.D.1

Aloha Sir and fellow government colleagues,

This testimony is in support for the proposed amendment to SB 2650, SD2 (SB 2650, SD2 HD1) that will prohibit the use of private contracts and vendors for intake and eligibility of DHS Welfare and public assistance services. This proposed amendment would also require the DHS to convene a task force to determine the feasibility of the EPOD reorganization prior to implementation. The report of the Task Force's findings shall be submitted to the 2011 Legislative session.

The people of Hawaii have been made aware of the economic situation of our island home and nation as it affects each and every household. We are reminded of this when we buy our food; we purchase gas, when we pay our utilities. We are reminded when our children and state agencies are out on furlough, when we make reservations to fly off island to look for employment. We are reminded when we learn of bankruptcies, buyouts, merges. We are reminded when we learn of more lay offs, cut backs, and closures. Education cost and

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expenses increase as teachers decrease. Homelessness has become an epidemic, as well as drug & alcohol abuse, domestic violence. Children are sexually abused, neglected or killed. Children are killing their parents or themselves. Our families struggle to make ends meet and have no where to turn except for the state agencies that their earnings helped to support. Our food is laced with chemicals, recalls on our purchases are on a rise, and our health is declining. Cancer and diabetes, high blood pressure, strokes and heart attacks now affect the young as well as the elderly. We, the poor and moderate income families live this daily.

Each island must have an office that will provide face to face service. Each island must have a place where a person can go to talk about their needs and leave that place secure, knowing they were heard and will be given assistance. Many people are frustrated, stressed, and confused. Being on welfare is not just applying for benefits and making a determination. Clients have problems, whether they are disabled physically or mentally, elderly, unemployed trying to provide for their children, single parents, grandparents raising their grandchildren, or just those people who abuse the system, they have problems. With the daily difficulties we face, struggles will be intensified just knowing they have no where to express their needs. Talking to an automated telephone system will not lessen their frustrations. Clients will be asked to provide their social security numbers, income, assets, bank acct numbers etc online. Will their protection be guaranteed? What happens when there is a breach in the system? What happens when systems go down? There will be only two offices with all the clients in the State of Hawaii. Will there be a system to back up any emergency outages? Such a huge risk for legal law suits. People are taking their anger to the streets and are striking back.

Getting out of this recession is going to take time. We need to be available to serve those who are affected, who are hit the hardest. They will need compassion, sensitivity, direct assistance and security. Those who say people don't want or need face to face service have not worked in the community in this level. I've been an Eligibility Worker for 21 years and my clients want to be able to talk and see me face to face. I watch them cry when they feel they have no hope and I embrace them. I can see when they are not telling me the truth, I can help understand them when they are unable to speak English or help them read the application when they don't understand the questions. We celebrate the birth of a healthy child; we mourn the death of a spouse. We are the first agency they come to when they are in need.

We are in the community so we know who committing fraud and we are available when someone reports fraud. How can all this take place on any other island but your own?

I've read that this proposed plan is already used in Florida and they have won awards and great reviews. I would suggest a study to include the client's comments be conducted. Comments given were only those who support the EPOD plan.

Our islands are separated by water. We cannot be compared to Florida and our island needs cannot be compared to the mainland.

I am relieved to know you are in support of our people of Hawaii, whether they are clients or employees of the State. The State workers have taken the brunt of this economic crisis and I wonder how is it that the Governor expects to stimulate the economy when the people who have supported the general fund by their tax contributions are the very ones to lose their jobs. We too will be on the welfare line when our unemployment runs out.

I believe the EPOD plan is immature. I really believe those who mastered this plan do not have an understanding of the system and does not have any clue as to the depth of services we provide.

I am hopeful your colleagues will support this amendment and protect their

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constituents and guarantee services they need and rightfully deserve. I believe you and your colleagues can speak up for the vulnerable members of our community and protect their rights. Your service to the people is to guarantee their services.

I pray for your success. Mahalo for service.

Respectfully yours,



Bridget A. Mowat

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3/9/2010

LATE

TO Whom it may concern.....

3.10.10

My name is Jocelyn, I am a single disabled parent. Long story short, I didn't plan on things turning out this way. I am so grateful to the State of Hawaii and all the dedicated helpful worker's who have helped me and my children. I don't know what I do if I couldn't reach out to my worker? I also feel bad for them. What these poor worker's go thru. So over worked and totally undervalued. It scares me to think of how much more crime, theft, and danger our community could be in if people didn't receive help? Me and my entire family SUPPORT the HD one bill.....

LATE

To Whom it may concern, 3/10/10

I'm a single parent raising two kids and I'm very thankful that theres the state to turn to for help. without the state its hard as it is. and it really helps me get through with the benifets that I'm recieving. that's just my concern to keep the state worncers.

I support bill HD one. Thank you

Cheryl M.M. Botelho

I AM WRITING TO SUPPORT BILL HDI ONE. MY WIFE IS A ELIGIBILITY WORKER FOR THE STATE. MY WIFE WORKS HARD AND PUT'S UP WITH A-LOT CRAP FROM HER CHEWTS WEATHER IT BE THEM CALLING HER BAD NAME TO EVEN THREATING HER LIFE. IN SPITE OF ALL TI SHE FINDS HER JOB REWARDING AND FULLFILING. IT MAKE ME MAD, SAD, AND FEARFULL ALL AT THE SAME TIME MAD BECAUSE MY FAMILY'S LIVELYHOOD IS IN JERREY AND ME RECENTLY BECOMING SEVERLY ILL AND DKAABLE I AM UNABLE TO PICK-UP IF MY WIFE LOSES HER JOB MY FEAR PART COMES FROM MY ILLNESS SEE I AM ON DIAL 3 TIMES A WEEK I WILL DIE WITHOUT DIALYSIS TREATNE I AM COVERED UNDER MY WIFE'S MEDICAL THRU HER MEDICAL. I AM ABLE TO GO GET MY TREATMENT. IF SH LSES HER JOB AND MEDICAL HOW CAN I GO TO MY TREATMENT? WHAT WILL I DO? SHOULD I THEN APPLY FOR MEDICAL WITH THE STATE? BUT WITH WHO? IF THERE AR JU WORKERS? WHAT WORKER THERE ARE THEY ARE SO DAM OVERWORKEN HOW LONG IT WILL BE TIEL I GET COVERED?

(1)

I WILL MOST LIKELY BE DEAD BY THEN. THE TIME I'
BE COVERED? THATS MY GUESS? NOW ONTO MY SADNESS.
MY POOR WIFE IT PAINS ME TO SEE HER NOT BEING
ABLE TO SLEEP OR TEARING UP BECAUSE SHE DOESNT
KNOW ^{-?} HOW WE GOING PAY THE BILLS? HOW WE GOING
FEED THE KIDS AND GRANDKIDS? IF MY WIFE LOSSES H
JOB IT WILL BE DEVASTATING ONCE AGAIN I
SUPPORT THE HD ONE BILL...

HUSBAND OF A EW.....

J. Jindal

(2)

I WILL MOST LIKELY BE DEAD BY THEN. THE TIME I'
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JOB IT WILL BE DEVASTATING ONCE AGAIN I
SUPPORT THE HD ONE BILL ...

HUSBAND OF A EW

J. Jimenez

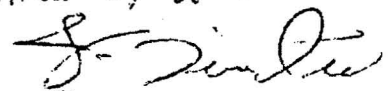
(2)

LATE

3.10.10

I am a daughter of a EW (eligibility worker). I am writing in support of the HD me bill. MOM! Mom has come a long way she came from the other side of the desk. From being a client to becoming a worker. Mom has always loved to help people and is a very selfless person in general. Mom loves her job and loves the she gets to help people but, she is extremely over worked already. If I happen to speak to her during a work day, I feel so bad because she always tells me the same thing. She says "Aww Kumua I am so swamped." "I don't know where to start". Her and her co-workers are so pushed over capacity with their workload. I just can't imagine what will happen if mom were to lose her job, for our family and also for her clients and their families. What would our crime rate look like then? Please think about how mom and her co-workers losing their jobs will affect our community's. For my family it could be life or death, see my dad is on dialysis 3 times a week if he doesn't get that treatment 3 times a week, he will die. Dad is covered under mom's medical, so you see that's how it's life or death for us. Mom has had lots of sleepless nights lately and fears the outcome, so I beg of you please don't let all these bad things happen to all of us.

Child of a EW.



original
on legal
size paper.

LATE
testimony

1 of 2

3/11/10

Senate bill 2650 relating to the DHS

① Private Contractors, to date, are self-serving and ineffective at providing all the necessary services to all DHS clients timely or qualitatively.

a - there is a conflict of interest between non-profit and profit driven organizations contracted to provide all necessary services

b - DHS administrator justify their actions with false information and distorted reports or facts. The DHS/DHRD policies & procedure essentially control all information necessary to make objective assessments of the success or failure of any and all programs.

② DHS/DHRD is unable to plan properly for changes that they have made or ~~pl~~ want to make.

③ There is a culture within DHS/DHRD that compels all employees to follow blindly the administrator requests whether right or wrong. And the penalty is retaliation.

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③ there is a culture within DHS/DHRD that compels all employees to follow blindly the administrator's requests whether right or wrong. And the penalty is retaliation.

④ The AG's office is a key part to what DHS/DHRD is doing but not in the best interest of employees, only for the benefit of this "culture" of administrators who have self-serving agendas which excludes the clients' benefits or rights.

⑤ If there is 50% fraud in DHS/DHRD Prevention would save money.

- ⑤ (cont) DHS/DHPRD does not know how prevention techniques should be integrated into the planning function
- ⑥ Communication in an organization upwards; downwards is critical to its success. DHS/DHPRD's culture is one-way "downwards" and there is the unwritten rule which administrators work through what they call the "chain of command."
- ⑦ The Governor; Kollers administration needs to take a complete reduction in all pay raises like all DHS employees have.
- ⑧ Koller cites Florida's success with the EPOD concept, cites one consulting group as proof but no other. The bottom line is she is wrong. Also note that the company in Florida that ripped off \$50,000,000.00 from the State of Florida is the parent company to OhanaCare. One of the two health care providers that the Koller administration put

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⑧ Koller cites Florida's success with the EPOD concept, cites one consulting group as proof but no other. The bottom line is she is wrong. Also note that the company in Florida that ripped off \$50,000,000.00 from the State of Florida is the parent company to OhanaCare. One of the two health care providers that the Koller administration put in place in Hawaii after changing the way MedQuest, Medicaid functions in Hawaii. Apparently there is a conflict of interest here too.

⑨ Why is all the money being awarded to out of state entities somehow tied to DHS/DHRD administrators friends or families?

CARLOS HERNANDEZ

I come to you today to testify in support of SB 2650. The DHS Administration's current rush to establish the EPOD system is ill-conceived. DHS in all its facets is currently understaffed and over-worked. Members of this august body have heard testimony over the past few weeks on the effect that the RIF of 2009 has had on the Department and the inability to service its clientele. Further hasty reductions in force would be disastrous.

The Administration's claims are tacitly false. With the private sector reeling from the effects of a faltering economy, the Department is staggering under the demands for increased services. Fewer workers cannot increase efficiency and speed up the benefit determinations regardless of new technology.

Improvements in technology require in-depth planning and training. AS we have seen, the Administration is reattempting to rush through the Reorganization of the Department so educated planning and research probably has not been done. To date there has been no field testing of any new technology, either hardware or software, by the front line workers.

Training for the projected EPOD employees is currently nigh unto impossible. Both Welfare and Med Quest training Units have been gutted and would be unable to train the remaining employees in the necessary programs quickly enough to prevent disaster. In fact, according to current training models there will be NO qualified fully trained employees based on the EPOD model. Former Welfare eligibility workers will not be qualified to process medical cases for nearly a year from date of training. Former Med Quest workers will not be qualified till almost 2012.

Case complexity will not change nor will meaningful interview duration. Interviewing and qualifying a single person who speaks English with limited income and limited assets for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance is far different from interviewing a single Bosnian speaking parent of three, who lives with the natural parent of one of the children and another minor relative, who is disabled, applying for Financial, Supplemental Nutrition, and Child Care assistance.

The lack of fully trained workers, case complexity, untried software, and unfamiliar hardware are not the only factors spelling doom for this headlong rush to the cliff called Disaster. Our clients like to come in. They drop off paperwork when they know that they can mail it. They ask to see a worker knowing how backlogged they may be. They need to see the Face of Government. They need to know that they matter.

The Administration's paradigm shift reduces our clientele to mere numbers. No more Mr. Botelho. No more Mrs. Pacheco. No more Marie, Kalani, Nite, or Siegfried. Just HAWI case numbers. The ideology behind the EPOD changes our clients and the children we have watched growing up to customers. Our Services become products. No more Aloha, no more Ohana.

The Bill before you today gives the State time to formulate a plan which will preserve the best of our Human Services Department and make changes for the better. Don't let the lame duck Administration pillage public services to the detriment of our clients, our neighbors, our friends.

LATE
Testimony

THE SENATE TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE
STATE OF HAWAII
2010

LATE
Testimony

03/11/2010

To all Representatives and Senators:

I appear before you today as a private citizen and advocate for all of Hawaii's needy in support of Senate Bill 2650. I am in favor of S.B. 2650 specifically Part II, Section two and three. The Eligibility Processing Operations Division reorganization plan is a major undertaking for DHS and needs further study instead of being rushed into existence on July 1 2010. As I have said in my two prior letters to the Legislatures Human Services Committees, the call center idea will not work in Hawaii. There will definitely be consequences for our disadvantaged customers if the EPOD is allowed to be implemented.

This issue is still under the general public's radar, and the full enormity of the poorly considered plan's impact on our State of Hawaii will show almost immediate results with customer evictions, homelessness, fraud and crime on the rise. Another result will be adult customers and children going hungry or worse if these individuals and families are not able to access needed medical assistance. Although it may take some time to measure, the most telling sign that our residents are not able to access assistance programs under the EPOD is Hawaii's participation in the Food Stamp program will stagnate or decline when needy customers are not able to access the needed food benefit, much like it did in Florida. For this administration to believe that by chopping the eligibility worker staff on all islands, the very state employees that provide direct access to state programs by 50% and expect the remaining eligibility staff to process benefits for more than three hundred thousand residents is truly beyond belief. For this administration to forge ahead with this ill conceived EPOD plan in the face of documented failures of other states that rushed to implement their own call center warehouse units, shows the lack of care and concern the current administration places on the lives of the disadvantaged customers we serve. Believe it or not, our disadvantaged customers, many of whom are the working poor, are a vital player in the State of Hawaii's economy. They use the assistance provided to purchase food, goods and services, pay rent, access preschool assistance etc, do not disregard this economic group.

To simply throw away two hundred thirty highly trained state staff who provide fast and accurate benefit access to our customers is absurd. The current administration would rather have them collecting unemployment while the EPOD falters in its inception, is not in the best interest of our customers and definitely not in the best interest of the State of Hawaii. This administration has issued millions of taxpayer dollars to private contractors who are doing BESSD work that should be done by BESSD employees. These contracts should be terminated before any State of Hawaii eligibility worker staff are laid off. Legislative oversight is essential now to make sure that as a state, Hawaii is doing its best to help the population that needs help the most, our disadvantaged. Finally, a complete independent financial and operational audit must be employed as soon as the current administration leaves state service. Thank you very much for allowing me to share my thoughts with all of you.

Sincerely,



Carson E. Wilberts
DHS employee and advocate for all Hawaii's needy.