



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 420
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
www.hawaii.gov/labor
Phone: (808) 586-8675 / Fax: (808) 586-8685
Email: dlir.ocs@hawaii.gov

February 2, 2011

To: The Honorable Angus Mckelvey, Chair
House Committee on Economic Revitalization and Business

Date: Thursday, February 3, 2011
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 016, State Capitol

From: Mila Kahaanui, Executive Director
Office of Community Services
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF INTENT

Re: H.B. 734 Relating to the Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force

Good Morning Chair Mckelvey, Vice Chair Choy, and committee members. My name is En Young of the Office of Community Services (OCS), an agency administratively attached to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR). We appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of the intent of this measure.

The reduction of poverty is an issue that continues to transcend our State's traditional program organization. Programs such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and Employment Core Services (ECS) in DLIR, SEE and First-to-Work in DHS, WIC in DOH, and even School Lunch Subsidy Programs in DOE all contribute to the economic self-sufficiency of our low-income residents in different, yet meaningful ways. We believe the infrastructure exists to tackle each individual aspect of a low-income person's basic needs.

What we lack, at many levels of government, is the communication and coordination of government agencies, between Departments, between Executive, Legislative, and Judicial

branches, and between providers of the direct services to alleviate the conditions that perpetuate this circumstance.

OCS is concerned that the task force proposed is comprised only of Legislative members. We respect the introducer's idea of creating a concrete, measurable goal of a fifty per cent reduction in poverty in the next ten years. With all due respect a panel of Legislators will be insufficient to provide the insight and experience necessary to make true progress toward this goal. We are additionally concerned that by tying poverty to the Federal definition, fluctuations in poverty guidelines proposed by Congress could increase or decrease the number of poverty stricken individuals with absolutely no correlation to improvements or failures in the State's implementation.

OCS whole-heartedly supports the creation of a plan to increase economic opportunity. To this end, OCS plans to leverage Federal funding to host a statewide conference bringing together stakeholders from public, private, and non-profit sectors sometime later this year to create just such a plan. We would appreciate any participation or expertise your members may be able to provide and will keep the Legislature apprised of progress toward this measurable.

To provide some context for this conference, you may be aware OCS was created to consolidate four key programs within the state, one of which was the Office of Economic Opportunity. Additionally we are charged, under HRS 371K-3 to "Serve as the principal official in state government responsible for the coordination of programs for the needy, poor, and disadvantaged persons..." and under HRS 371K-4, among other duties, to "Establish statewide goals and objectives relating to disadvantaged persons, refugees, and immigrants..." With this in mind, OCS believes it is the right office and now is the right time to reassess this challenge that is becoming increasingly salient in the wake of the recession.

Finally, we believe the creation of a task force would most likely be better introduced as a resolution, rather than codified in Statute.

Community Voice, Collective Action

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Jason Okuhama (*at large*)
Managing Partner,
Commercial & Business
Lending

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Rian Dubach (*at large*)
Community Development &
CRA Manager
American Savings Bank

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Wayne Tanna (*at large*)
Asset Building Coalition &
Chaminade University

Kipukai Kualii (*Kaua'i*)
Anahola Kaua'i Agribusiness
Microenterprise Project

Stacy Crivello (*Moloka'i*)
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Ke Aupuni Lokahi

Puni Kekauoha &
Adrienne Dillard (*O'ahu*)
Papakolea Community
Development Corporation

Keikialoha Kekipi &
Susie Osborne (*Hawai'i*)
Ho'oulu Lahui/ Kua O Ka La
Public Charter School

Kukui & Gary Maunakea-Forth
(*O'ahu*)
Wai'ananae Community Re-
development Corporation –
Mala Ai 'Opio (MA'O)

Tommy Otake (*at large*)
Attorney At Law

HACBED Staff

Robert Agres, Jr
Executive Director

Brent Dillabaugh
Asset Policy Coordinator

Larissa Meinecke
Asset Policy Associate

Padmendra Shrestha
Planning & Research Assistant

Briana Monroe
Program Support Assistant

Susan Tamanaha
VITA Program Coordinator

House Committee on Economic Revitalization & Business

Hearing, Thursday, Feb. 3, 2011 at 8:00 a.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 312

HB 734 - SUPPORT

Aloha Chair McKelvey and Committee Members:

The Hawai'i Alliance for Community Based Economic Development (HACBED) is submitting testimony in **support of HB 734** which establishes an economic opportunity poverty reduction task force.

We thank you for considering the creation of a task force that would: 1) assess current state policies and practices, along with evidence-based solutions utilized in other states, that promote economic opportunity and poverty reduction; and 2) develop a plan to expand economic opportunities in Hawaii to reduce the number of families in poverty.

As families and communities struggle to get through these hard economic times, a joint legislative task force that seeks strategies to reduce poverty in Hawai'i, with a goal of reducing poverty by at least 50 percent by 2021, is very much needed to help families reach self sufficiency and move out of poverty.

Across the nation, asset building has proven to help families move out of poverty. Asset building strategies help families advance economic opportunities for themselves, save and build assets so they are able to reach self sufficiency and not fall back into poverty. Assets are important for three reasons:

1. To have **financial security** against difficult times
2. To create **economic opportunities** for oneself
3. To **leave a legacy** for future generations to have a better life

In 2010, the State Asset Building Task Force completed its final report on strategies that can help families move out of poverty and build assets. The final report can be viewed on our website at: <http://www.hacbed.org/images/stories/PDF/asset%20building%20task%20force%20final%20report.pdf>. We feel the work of the Asset Building Task Force could complement the work of this task force.

We would also like to ask that voices of families and communities be part of this task force to help shape strategies and policies that truly help families move out of poverty and reach self sufficiency.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

Brent Dillabaugh, Asset Policy Coordinator
Larissa Meinecke, Asset Policy Associate



February 1, 2011

TO: Rep. Angus L.K. McKelvey, Chair, Rep. Isaac W. Choy, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee on Economic Revitalization & Business

FROM: Jackie Berry, Executive Director

RE: **HB 734**

Hearing: Thursday, February 3, 2011

Honorable Chairperson McKelvey, Vice Chairperson Choy and Members of the Committee on Economic Revitalization & Business

HMHB is a statewide coalition of public and private agencies and individuals committed to the improvement of maternal and infant health status in Hawaii through education, coordination and advocacy. **HMHB is testifying today in support of HB 734 Relating to the Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force.**

The opportunity to provide for one's family is essential to well being and health. Many households in Hawai'i are single parent headed by women. These women need and deserve a job which will allow her to provide for her family. As a state we need to find a means to expand economic opportunities to reduce the rising poverty rate.

We urge you support of this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration of this bill and our testimony.

845 22nd Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii 96816
Phone # (808) 737-5805

E-mail: jackieb@hmhb-hawaii.org website: www.hmhb-hawaii.org

From: Kathleen Hasegawa [kathi@hawaiihabitat.org]
Sent: Wednesday, February 02, 2011 11:03 AM
To: ERBtestimony
Subject: Testimony on HB734

Hawaii Habitat for Humanity Association
Kathleen Hasegawa, Executive Director

Testimony in support of HB734
Hearing: February 3, 2011 8 a.m.
State Capitol Conference Room 312

To: Chair Angus McKelvey
Committee on Economic Revitalization and Business

Hawaii Habitat for Humanity Supports this bill. It is of vital importance that the legislature develops and supports methods of reducing poverty in our communities.

We believe that **the issue of affordable housing should be added to this bill.** The lack of sufficient affordable housing is one of the primary causes of poverty in Hawaii. If an individual or family is paying 50-100% of their income on rent there isn't sufficient income to cover the remainder of their necessities such as electricity, food, transportation to work, clothes for the children etc.

Please add affordable housing as a consideration for this committee.

Kathleen Hasegawa
Executive Director

Hawaii Habitat for Humanity Association
1427 Dillingham Blvd. Suite 201
Honolulu, HI 96817
Office: 808-847-7676
Cell: 808-352-7281