

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



PATRICIA MCMANAMAN
INTERIM DIRECTOR

PANKAJ BHANOT
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 28, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Interim Director

SUBJECT: H.B. 758, H.D. 1 – AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF GENERAL
OBLIGATION BONDS AND MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
DIVISION

Hearing: Monday, February 28, 2011, 1:30 pm.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Services, Department of Human Services, to upgrade equipment and facilities for the Ho'opono program, effective date July 1, 2050.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the overall concept of this bill as it includes initiatives supportive of our goals and objectives but we are concerned about the cost implications generated by this proposal.

Ho'opono Services for the Blind, a Branch of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind Division of the Department of Human Services, is housed in an aging building. The improvements needed are roof repairs to prevent leaks, renovation of the public restrooms, and improvements to the acoustics and soundproofing the auditorium to allow persons with hearing impairments to hear more clearly during meetings.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this bill.
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AGENCY

TESTIMONY OF WARREN TOYAMA IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 758

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee;

My name is Warren Toyama and I am the founder and president of the 43 year old Hawaii Association of the Blind. I am testifying in support of House Bill 758 which calls in part for an appropriation bond for Ho'opono's building and some of the things that are needed to upgrade the Ho'opono program.

Mr. Chairman, the truth of the matter is that we as blind consumers have permitted personal feelings to interfere with us doing what we can to assist the Ho'opono program thrive and effectively rehabilitate blind clients. We have decided to correct our failures and our support of H. B. 758 is a sign of this change.

We, the blind, want to declare that we shall have the best rehabilitation program for the blind in the United States. We pledge to take aim at the Iowa and other top programs in the country and help to build Hawaii's rehabilitation program to match or surpass the nation's best programs.

To achieve this, we need to begin with little steps, like fixing some of the flaws in the Ho'opono building. We need also to begin putting together the most ambitious and creative team of rehabilitation counselors, teachers and aides we can find to build a positive, forward looking team.

To this end we need your help to get us started. Please pass House Bill 758.

Thank you very much.

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Saturday, February 26, 2011 10:49 PM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: foxhawaii2010@yahoo.com
Subject: Testimony for HB758 on 2/28/2011 1:30:00 PM

Testimony for FIN 2/28/2011 1:30:00 PM HB758

Conference room: 308
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Bertil Fox
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: foxhawaii2010@yahoo.com
Submitted on: 2/26/2011

Comments:

I support HB758, HD1 to issue gen. obligation bonds & making an appropriation for the Ho'opono program, under the Department of Human Services. The services they provide help our blind and visually impaired to be gainfully employed in our state.

Mahalo,
Bertil Fox

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
ent: Saturday, February 26, 2011 11:11 PM
fo: FINTestimony
Cc: smith808143@yahoo.com
Subject: Testimony for HB758 on 2/28/2011 1:30:00 PM

Testimony for FIN 2/28/2011 1:30:00 PM HB758

Conference room: 308
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: David Smith
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: smith808143@yahoo.com
Submitted on: 2/26/2011

Comments:

I strongly support HB758, HD1 to authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds and an appropriation for the Vocational Rehab. & Services for the Blind Division. The facilities are in dire need of repair at the Ho'opono program which provides the nation's best training for the blind. In fact, their students who complete their employment training program make an ave. of \$27 an hour, which is the top in the nation.

The Ho'opono program allows Hawaii's blind to be independent and employed, thereby reducing or eliminating their need for welfare.

This measure is needed to continue the great service to Hawaii's outstanding citizens who simply want to become wage earners and contribute to helping Hawaii's economy by paying their share of taxes.

David Smith

FINTestimony

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, February 27, 2011 9:01 AM
To: FINTestimony
Cc: kaipokama@yahoo.com
Subject: Testimony for HB758 on 2/28/2011 1:30:00 PM

Testimony for FIN 2/28/2011 1:30:00 PM HB758

Conference room: 308
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Kalani Kealoha
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: kaipokama@yahoo.com
Submitted on: 2/27/2011

Comments:

I support HB758, HD1 because this bill will allow our blind and visually impaired to continue their education and job training at an essential vocational rehabilitation center in Hawaii - the Ho'opono program.

Their graduates are all employed and their average pay after being trained at the Ho'opono program is \$27 per hour and this ranks no. 1 in the nation for blind.

I believe we need to support such an important program, which will ultimately save the state large amounts of public assistance spending, as we help our disabled become independent and "off the welfare system" and paying taxes to help our state move out of this recession.

The bonds and/or funding request is fractional when compared to the state cost savings and tax revenue from our disabled becoming self-sufficient.

Kalani Kealoha