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The Twenty-Sixth Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Labor and Public Employment

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association
January 31, 2012

H.B. 2228 – RELATING TO
BREASTFEEDING IN
THE WORKPLACE

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the purpose and intent of H.B. 2228, which requires an employer with twenty or more employees to make reasonable efforts to provide a clean location for breastfeeding employees to express breast milk in privacy; requires covered employers to post a notice pertaining to this provision in a conspicuous location; and establishes a civil fine for the failure of an employer to provide a location or post notice.

Supporting breastfeeding employees is good for business and good for our community. Information from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health states lactation support in the workplace can: 1) lower medical costs and health insurance claims for breastfeeding employees and their infants (up to three times less for breastfeeding employees); 2) reduce turnover rates (86-92 percent of breastfeeding employees returning to work after childbirth when a lactation support program is provided compared to the national average of 59 percent); 3) lower absenteeism rates (up to half the number of 1-day absences); 4) improve productivity; and 5) raise employee morale and loyalty.

The measure would be strengthened by adding that the clean and private location for expressing breast milk be located near a sink with running water for washing hands and rinsing out breast pump parts, and have an electrical outlet. We ask for your consideration and passage of this bill with the suggested amendment. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the intent of H.B. 2228.

Respectfully submitted,

Leiomalama E. Desha
Deputy Executive Director