

HB 2547, HD1

Measure Title: MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES.

Report Title: General Assistance (HMS 204); Emergency Appropriation

Description: Makes an emergency appropriation from the general revenues of the State of Hawaii for fiscal year 2011-2012 to address the budget shortfall in the general assistance program (HMS 204) in the Department of Human Services. (HB2547 HD1)

Companion: SB2809

Package: Gov

Current Referral: HMS, WAM

Introducer(s): SAY (Introduced by request of another party)

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



PATRICIA McMANAMAN,
DIRECTOR
BARBARA A. YAMASHITA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

March 13, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 2547, H.D. 1 – MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

Hearing: Tuesday, March 13, 2012; 1:15 p.m.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 2547, H.D. 1, is to make an emergency appropriation from the general revenues of the State of Hawaii for fiscal year 2011-2012 to address the budget shortfall in for the general assistance program (HMS 204) in the Department of Human Services.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services strongly supports this bill.

The general assistance program (HMS 204) will expend all appropriated funds before the end of the current fiscal year 2011-2012. Pursuant to section 346-53(b), Hawaii Revised Statutes, the general assistance program is a block grant program; the maximum allowance a general assistance recipient may receive is determined by dividing the amount of the appropriation by the number of general assistance recipients.

Due to increasing general assistance program caseloads, the Department reduced monthly general assistance payments in October 2011 from \$344 to \$319 a

month. Caseloads continue to rise and the Department will be unable to maintain the current maximum \$319 per month general assistance payment to approximately 5,584 disabled recipients. The current appropriation of \$319 per month is not enough to cover living and housing expenses for individuals who have no other viable means of support.

DHS would offer one update of information to this bill. Based on the latest expenditure figures, the DHS will have to reduce the general assistance payment to \$275 beginning April 2012.

Stopping the benefit payment or reducing the amount of the benefit payment for these individuals poses a real threat to the individuals' health and safety. It is also almost certain to trigger increased homelessness. To prevent another reduction of general assistance payments starting April 2012, additional funds are urgently needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2547 HD1: MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair, Senator Les Ihara, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Human Services

FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Tuesday, March 13, 2013; 1:15 p.m.; CR 016

Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Ihara, and Members of the Committee on Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2547 HD1, which makes an emergency appropriation to the Department of Human Services to address the shortfall in the budget for the general assistance program. I am Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison for housing and homelessness issues at Catholic Charities Hawaii. Catholic Charities Hawaii supports this bill.

There is no Senate companion bill for this issue.

Catholic Charities Hawaii is very concerned about the possibility that many persons now on General Assistance will be forced into homelessness if their General Assistance payments are further reduced. The benefit currently is hardly enough to pay rent even at subsidized housing or special housing such as clean and sober homes. The benefit has already been reduced in FY 2012 from \$353 down to \$319 currently. Without an additional appropriation from the legislature, the benefit will be further reduced to \$275 in April 2012. We fear that this may force many of those now collecting General Assistance out of their homes and into homelessness.

It would be much more costly to the State to have to provide homeless services to help these people regain housing, versus keeping them in housing with the General Assistance payments.

We support this emergency appropriation which would enable the Department of Human to continue the General Assistance payments at a very minimal level.

We urge you to support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2547.





HAWAII DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER

1132 Bishop Street, Suite 2102, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone/TTY: (808) 949-2922 Toll Free: 1-800-882-1057 Fax: (808) 949-2928

E-mail: info@hawaiidisabilityrights.org Website: www.hawaiidisabilityrights.org

THE SENATE THE TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION OF 2012

Committee on Human Services Testimony in of Support of H.B.2547, HD1 Making An Emergency Appropriation To The Department of Human Services

**Tuesday, March 13, 2012, 1:15 P.M.
Conference Room 016**

Chair Chun Oakland, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Disability Rights Center testifies in support of this bill. We do so, both as an organization that sees every day the struggles of the poor and disabled, as well as a member of the Department of Human Services Financial Assistance Advisory Council. As a member we have been briefed by the Department and we are aware of the shortfall that exists and the dire choices that will need to be made in the event that an emergency appropriation is not forthcoming. General assistance recipients already subsist on an allotment that is so low that it is virtually impossible to fathom how they can exist. The meager sum of \$319 per month will need to be reduced to a level of \$275 per month without the support that the Department of Human Services needs.

Reducing their benefits further merely increases the chances that they will become homeless or otherwise find themselves in a situation which will jeopardize their health and safety. It is our understanding as a member of the Financial Assistance Advisory Council that the Department plans to develop a budget that will prevent the necessity of applying for an emergency appropriation in the future. However, to the extent that these funds are crucial right now, it is imperative that the legislature step in and address this short term, temporary need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

