



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

March 29, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable David Y. Ige, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

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

Hearing: Thursday, March 29, 2012; 9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 211, 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 5,642 disabled recipients. This is up from the 5,584 recipients reported in earlier testimony. 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.

From: [Louis Erteschik](#)
To: [WAM Testimony](#)
Subject: HB2547, HD1
Date: Tuesday, March 27, 2012 9:08:00 PM

The Hawaii Disability Rights Center supports this emergency appropriation for the Department of Human Services.

Louis Erteschik
Executive Director



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Executive Director

**COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF
HB2547 HD1 – MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
HUMAN SERVICES**

Committee on Ways and Means
Senator David Ige, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice-Chair

March 29, 2012 at 9:00 a.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii submits testimony in support of HB2547 HD1_– Making an Emergency Appropriation to the Department of Human Services. This bill would provide the Department of Human Services with an emergency appropriation to maintain a basic level of support for general assistance. Due to the increased need in the community for assistance due to the economy, the Department of Human Services is projecting a shortfall to the funds available for general assistance. General assistance is a program which provides financial assistance to disabled adults without children. The limited assistance that it provides can be critical to helping a disabled adult maintain housing or get access to basic necessities. It also provides a critical bridge for disabled adults who are seeking disability assistance from social security and upon award of social security; the state is repaid for the general assistance paid to the disabled adult.

Because general assistance is a block grant, assistance levels are determined based on the number of people in the community needing assistance. As these number rise (as they have over the last few years because of the economy), the assistance amount is reduced. Currently, the amount of assistance received by a disabled adult on general assistance is \$319 per month. Further, because of current demand and without an emergency appropriation this fiscal year, this amount may drop to \$188 in the month of June.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina
Executive Director

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii (Legal Aid) is the only legal service provider with offices on every island in the state, and in 2011 provided legal assistance to over 10,000 Hawai'i residents in the areas of consumer fraud, public assistance, family law, the prevention of homelessness, employment, protection from domestic violence, and immigration. Our mission is to achieve fairness and justice through legal advocacy, outreach and education for those in need.

Date: March 27th, 2012

Location: Conference Room 211

Testifier: Sara Williams, BSW, MSW Student at Hawaii Pacific University

I have been at HPU going to school since 2008. I have witnessed first hand the homelessness that plagues Honolulu. The problem has not gotten better since I first started school but only worse. I watch people that are on their way to work simply pass the homeless by and seem not to care that there are countless human beings living on the streets. I would like to see less people suffer and less homelessness on the streets of this beautiful city.

I am writing this testimony in strong support of Bill HB 2547 which is to make an emergency appropriation from the general revenues of the State of Hawaii for fiscal year 2011-2012 concerning the budget that wont be enough for the general assistance program in DHS.

Without the emergency fund DHS will have to reduce the general assistance from \$319 currently to \$275. I think this could make the problem of homelessness get worse as this amount is not always enough or barely enough to cover basic human needs now. I believe the emergency funds could greatly benefit the homeless problem.

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