

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



LORETTA J. FUDDY, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

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In reply, please refer to:
File:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

HB 2567, HD1, Relating to Marriage License

Testimony of Loretta J. Fuddy, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.

Director of Health

February 28, 2012

- 1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health strongly supports HB 2567.
- 2 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department anticipates revenues of \$1.2 million based on 30,000
- 3 marriages/civil unions annually.
- 4 **Purpose and Justification:** House Bill 2567 is part of Governor Abercrombie's Administrative
- 5 Package and supports the New Day Agenda goal of transforming government. This proposal will raise
- 6 the marriage license fee to \$100 from \$60 to fund the operation, maintenance, and enhancement of the
- 7 statewide marriage/civil union online registration system proposal, and will reduce dependence on
- 8 General Funds. The current fee has not changed in 10 years.
- 9
- 10 On January 1, 2012 the Department of Health implemented an online system to register marriage/civil
- 11 union performers, issue licenses for marriages and civil unions, and register marriage and civil unions
- 12 performed in the State. The department would like to retain the proposed \$40 increase in the
- 13 marriage/civil union license fee to cover increased operational costs. The majority of couples entering
- 14 traditional marriage and civil unions are non-residents and require much more resources to inform and
- 15 educate the couples about the marriage/civil union registration process. In addition the couples also

1 bring their own marriage/civil union officiants to perform the ceremony. The State must register and
2 educate the performer about the laws and procedures regarding marriage/civil unions in Hawaii. These
3 individuals will usually perform only one marriage/civil union during their visit. It is very expensive to
4 register and train these visiting performers in addition to registering, training and servicing the
5 performers who reside in Hawaii. Many of the visiting performers arrive only a day or two before
6 performing the ceremony.

7

8 The department plants to enlist the hotel industry to provide license agents in visit destination areas
9 where most of the couples stay. These private individuals require extensive training in processing the
10 marriage/civil union applications and issuing licenses. The Governor's Liaison Offices on the Neighbor
11 Islands no longer provide these services and some of the revenue will fund training of hotel personnel to
2 replace the services formerly provided by the Governor's Liaison Offices.

13

14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2567.



TO: Chair Marcus Oshiro
Vice Chair Marilyn Lee
Members of the Committee

FR: Nanci Kreidman, M.A.
Chief Executive Officer

RE: H.B. 2567, HD 1 Support with Comments

Aloha. Thank you for the opportunity to enhance dialogue about the plan by Department of Health to increase fees assessed when issuing marriage licenses. This issue is one we would urge you to examine carefully, as currently there are many essential community programs and system initiatives that benefit from the fees collected.

We would like to advocate for the continued distribution of funds collected to spouse and child abuse special accounts established under sections 346-7.5 and 601-3.6. It is not clear why revenues from marriage licenses are being deposited into the birth defects special fund (321-426).

It is our understanding that the DOH needs the increased revenues for effective operations of the vital statistics functions it carries out. We are hoping the increase will be sufficient to enable these operations to function effectively while also supporting the important work being done which is funded, in part, by the spouse and child abuse accounts. Hawaii's legislation was modeled after efforts across the country and needs for public support of child and spouse abuse programs have certainly not abated-in fact, it can be asserted that requests for assistance from programs supported through the special accounts have increased exponentially.

There are many worthwhile programs funded with these dollars including: Fatality Review Team, family Court Symposium Training for judges, teen dating abuse program, shelters, Family Strengthening Services, Child Death Review, Family Visitation Center, to name a few.

Priority of funding for child and spouse abuse programs remains uncertain and undeniably wavers. This, in spite of the reality, that programs have suffered serious budget shortfalls, reducing the ability to serve those who need us. It must be emphasized we are a key feature of the safety net.

Please do not let this opportunity pass. It is essential to have your support as we continue to bring peace to island families. Thank you.

