

To: The Honorable John M. Mizuno, Chair  
The Honorable Jo Jordan, Vice Chair  
House Human Services Committee

The Honorable Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair  
House Finance Committee

From: Laura Robertson, President/CEO  
Danielle Moskowitz, VP of Human Services  
Ann Boyd, Director of Workforce Development  
Edwina Minglana, Director of Employment Services  
Goodwill Industries of Hawaii, Inc.

Date: February 9, 2011

Re: **Testimony in Strong Support of H.B. 727 – Relating To Temporary Assistance To Needy Families**

Goodwill Industries of Hawaii, Inc. (Goodwill) is among the largest human service non-profit organizations in Hawaii. Our mission is to help people find and succeed in employment. Last year, we served over 13,000 people statewide and placed 1,667 people into jobs in our community. Goodwill has fifty (50) years of experience assisting people who have employment barriers find jobs and gain self-sufficiency. A significant percentage of the people we serve are low-income individuals and families receiving financial assistance -- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Temporary Assistance for Other Needy Families (TAONF). Last year, we served over 9,100 adult program participants who were economically disadvantaged, including Welfare-To-Work and Food Stamp recipients.

Goodwill strongly supports H.B. 727 which appropriates federal temporary assistance for needy families' program funds for programs that train individuals for jobs, help with job-search activities, and encourage financial self-sufficiency; as well as employment and training programs and other services that enable families receiving public assistance benefits to remain intact. Our extensive experience working with Hawaii's TANF and TAONF population indicates that an intensive focus on employment and training services is the key to promoting financial and social stability and eventual self-sufficiency for individuals and their families.

Many TANF and TAONF recipients entering the workforce for the first time, as well as low-income workers at risk of dependence on public assistance, lack employment skills, life skills, financial literacy education and other skills necessary to get a job, make sound financial decisions, build assets and savings, establish good credit, and/or achieve homeownership. The economically vulnerable residents of our state must be provided comprehensive employment and training programs, as well as the education and tools needed to learn how to create a resume, job-search, obtain and maintain a job, make sound financial decisions, participate in the mainstream financial system, and move up the economic ladder.

It is important to consider the dire financial situation facing our local communities. Unemployment numbers are significant and small and large companies continue to reduce staffing levels. It will be difficult for TANF and TAONF participants to obtain employment in 2011, as they will be competing with individuals with no employment barriers for the limited job openings that remain. It is essential that comprehensive and effective employment and training programs are available to assist TANF and TAONF recipients during these difficult economic times.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in strong support of H.B. 727.