

SB 2936

Measure Title: RELATING TO PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

Report Title: Human Services; TANF Program; Public Assistance Programs

Description: Eliminates the asset limit for Hawaii's temporary assistance for needy families program eligibility. Exempts the fair market value of all motor vehicles in a household when determining eligibility for Hawaii's temporary assistance for needy families program.

Companion:

Package: None

Current Referral: HMS, WAM

Introducer(s): CHUN OAKLAND (BR), Shimabukuro

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Bridge to Hope
Serving UH Welfare Recipient Students

TO: Committee on Human Services
Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Sen. Les Ihara, Vice-Chair

FROM: Teresa Bill, Bridge to Hope Coordinator (956-8059)

RE: Testimony **Strongly SUPPORTING SB2936**, Relating to Human Services
Thurs. Feb 9, 2012 1:30 p.m. Conference Room 016

I am Teresa Bill, testifying in **strong support of SB2936 eliminating** asset limits for TANF/TAONF public assistance. I am the coordinator of a UH program called Bridge to Hope that supports TANF participants in their pursuit of higher education as a means of economic self-sufficiency. However my testimony is not the official testimony of the University.

Of the three bills addressing Asset Limits for TANF before the Committee this afternoon (SB2178, SB2936, SB2937) I would **prioritize SB2936** which eliminates the asset test for TANF. Other States have eliminated asset tests without experiencing drastic increases in caseload (net income tests remain); and elimination makes it easier for DHS to achieve cost-savings with reduced case manager time spent checking asset limits.

Eliminating the asset test was suggested by the Hawaii State Asset Building and Financial Education Taskforce submitted in January 2010 (pg. 34). When TANF was initiated, rules were implemented to deter complete loss of all savings; we need to adjust the figure to maintain the intent to keep savings an option for families to re-build economically. Our poorest families particularly need emergency savings to provide a cushion from unemployment or other unexpected loss of income. Savings and assets are precisely the kind of resources that allow families to move off – and stay off – public benefit programs. Yet asset limits can discourage anyone considering or receiving public benefits from saving for the future.

Additionally, I am keenly aware that the current \$5,000 asset test is a barrier for the TANF students I work with. When UHManoa tuition is \$4,550 per semester (and rising every year), a student who receives financial aid - scholarships or loans can find themselves penalized by this asset test as their checking account balance could exceed \$5,000 in the process of receiving aid & paying tuition etc.

Also, this bill only addresses asset tests for TANF, which is a good start. But General Assistance, and Aid to Blind & Disabled are also adults who are penalized for any saving; their asset test is even lower, currently at \$2-3000.

As SB2936 indicates, many families are forced to spend every shred of "emergency savings" they might have in order to qualify for public assistance. This forced spending and withholding of financial assistance (and foodstamps) until a family has lost everything contradicts every tenet of family financial stability. Once the family gains access to the public assistance program, they are then encouraged to begin building a path to "economic self-sufficiency" - often that includes rebuilding savings as a buffer against unexpected loss of jobs, car repair, etc. It is an unfortunate occurrence when a family must choose between initiating a savings plan and participating in TANF, whose stated goal is to encourage economic self-sufficiency; which reasonably includes emergency savings.

I urge you to **support SB2936** and give Hawaii families the ability to secure minimal public assistance without draining all resources.
Thank You

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, February 05, 2012 12:00 PM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: Brenda.Kosky@gmail.com
Subject: Testimony for SB2936 on 2/9/2012 1:30:00 PM

Testimony for HMS 2/9/2012 1:30:00 PM SB2936

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: Oppose
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Brenda Kosky
Organization: Individual
E-mail: Brenda.Kosky@gmail.com
Submitted on: 2/5/2012

Comments:

I oppose this Bill. You will have scams and con artists making big business while so called qualifying.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Saturday, February 04, 2012 12:47 PM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: robertscottwall@yahoo.com
Subject: Testimony for SB2936 on 2/9/2012 1:30:00 PM

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Testimony for HMS 2/9/2012 1:30:00 PM SB2936

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: Support
Testifier will be present: Yes
Submitted by: Scott Wall
Organization: Individual
E-mail: robertscottwall@yahoo.com
Submitted on: 2/4/2012

Comments: