



LATE TESTIMONY

Board of Directors

David Derauf, M.D.
Marc Fleischaker, Esq.
Naomi C. Fujimoto, Esq.
Patrick Gardner, Esq.
Francis T. O'Brien, Esq.
David J. Reber, Esq.

Executive Director

Victor Geminiani, Esq.

Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting and Commenting on HB 987 Relating to Human Services
House Committee on Human Services
Scheduled for Hearing on Tuesday, February 5, 2013, 9:30 AM, Room 329

Thank you for an opportunity to testify on House Bill 587, which appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services to restore staff positions on Maui, Lanai, and Molokai and make an appropriation for six full-time Medicaid eligibility workers as well as much-needed physicians.

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice (formerly Lawyers for Equal Justice) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) law firm created to advocate on behalf of low income individuals and families in Hawai'i on civil legal issues of statewide importance. Our core mission is to help our clients gain access to the resources, services, and fair treatment that they need to realize their opportunities for self-achievement and economic security.

We strongly support this measure because it is a proactive effort to ensure that the Department of Human Services is able to efficiently process applications and serve patients. Hawai'i Appleseed notes that the Department of Human Services has experienced serious problems with the timely processing of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, resulting in litigation brought by our organization. Following this lawsuit, the Department rapidly increased its timeliness rates. We commend the Department's dedicated efforts that have resulted in dramatic improvements in the timely processing of SNAP benefits.

This bill is a forward-looking measure to ensure that the Department can serve all eligible beneficiaries and comply with federal requirements. The Department has shown it has the administrative and managerial skills to implement an effective system that ensures low-income people receive desperately-needed SNAP benefits in a timely manner, and we believe that with the restoration of these positions that the Department will achieve and maintain similar success in the Medicaid program, even as caseloads increase. Adequate staffing is critical to serving our state's most vulnerable residents, and HB 587 will help ensure efficiently-provided benefits to eligible applicants.