NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

PATRICIA McMANAMAN
DIRECTOR

BARBARA A. YAMASHITA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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

March 14, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Mele Carroll, Chair
House Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **S.B. 301, S.D. 2 - RELATING TO ASSET BUILDING**

Hearing: Thursday, March 14, 2013; 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of S.B. 301, S.D. 2 is to establish a refundable state earned income tax credit.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this bill, provided it does not adversely impact nor replace the priorities in the Executive Biennium Budget. We respectfully defer to the Department of Taxation (DOTAX) on the feasibility of its implementation.

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

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

SHAN TSUTSUI
LT. GOVERNOR

FREDERICK D. PABLO
DIRECTOR OF TAXATION

JOSHUA WISCH
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION
P.O. BOX 259
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809
PHONE NO: (808) 587-1540
FAX NO: (808) 587-1560

To: The Honorable Mele Carroll, Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Human Services

Date: Thursday, March 14, 2013
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 329, State Capitol

From: Frederick D. Pablo, Director
Department of Taxation

Re: S.B. 301, S.D. 2 Relating to Asset Building

The Department **appreciates the intent** of S.B. 301, S.D. 2 and provides the following information and comments for your consideration.

S.B. 301, S.D.2 creates a refundable earned income tax credit (EITC) at the state level. The proposed credit would be equal to an unspecified percentage of the federal earned income tax credit allowed under section 32 of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended. This bill has a defective effective date of July 1, 2050.

The Department appreciates the intent to provide additional resources to taxpayers who may need assistance. The Department, however, notes that the tax structure is not the most efficient method of providing financial support to certain individuals.

A tax return requires the reporting or not, of certain types of income and losses occurring in the immediately preceding taxable year, and is not necessarily reflective of whether an individual is rich or poor. For instance, a tax return does not take into account any assets that the taxpayer may have, and therefore, is not a reliable method of determining an individual's wealth.

If the Legislature would like to pursue tax-based relief for individuals through the tax system, however, the Department prefers the tax credit structure set forth in S.B. 98, S.D. 1. The S.D.1 amendments would overhaul the current food/excise tax credit to reduce the income tax burden for low-income taxpayers. As proposed in S.B. 98, S.D. 1, the tax credit is converted to a nonrefundable tax credit based on a taxpayer's adjusted gross income, filing status, and the number of exemptions a taxpayer is entitled to.

The Department prefers the ax credit structure set forth in S.B. 98, S.D.1, because it is nonrefundable, revenue neutral, and simpler to administer compared to the proposed EITC set forth in S.B. 301 S.D.2. Refundable tax credits create incentives for fraud as even those with little or no taxable income may benefit. Nonrefundable tax credits limit this incentive as taxpayers only benefit to the extent of their tax liability. The amendments to the existing food/excise tax credit in S.B. 98, S.D. 1 work to achieve a tax credit that is more generous to our truly needy workers (those at or below federal poverty levels), while maintaining overall revenue neutrality. Since the proposed credit is an amendment to a credit the Department is currently administering, the additional administrative burden will be limited.

The Department also has serious concerns about being able to administer and enforce compliance for this type of refundable tax credit. Specifically, once a refund is issued on a fraudulent tax return there is no way for the Department to retrieve that money. This is because as it is highly unlikely that the perpetrator of the fraud could be located. In order to properly administer a Hawaii EITC, the Department would need additional resources to verify the claims for tax credit *before* the refunds are issued.

The federal EITC is based on the amount of income that is earned as an employee or through self-employment, and the number of qualifying dependents up to a maximum of three. Generally, a dependent is qualified for EITC purposes if the dependent is: of qualifying age, or totally and permanently disabled; a close blood or legal relationship between the taxpayer and the dependent; and the dependent resided with the taxpayer for the entire year. The Department, unlike the Internal Revenue Service, does not have access to computer matching with the master files of the Social Security Administration, which helps to deny improper claims. This leaves the Department in the situation where large refundable tax credits are issued before computer matching even takes place. Information sharing with the Internal Revenue Service also does not remedy these issues, because by the time the Department is notified that the federal EITC had been adjusted or denied, it will be too late for the refund to be effectively retrieved.

Furthermore, the Department has been informed by the Department of Human Services that approximately 20% of Hawaii residents who qualify for the federal EITC did not apply. This represents an estimated $59.8 million in federal EITC foregone by Hawaii residents. Therefore, the Department recommends further efforts to encourage Hawaii residents to apply for the federal EITC, both to bolster the incomes of the poor, and to bring money into the state.

The Department is not able to estimate the revenue impact of the proposed EITC (current S.B. 301, S.D. 2) as the percentage allowed for the State credit is unspecified. The Department estimates that for tax year 2011, however, EITC claims for Hawaii totaled $239 million. Thus, if the credit percentage was set at 20%, the revenue loss to the State can be estimated at $47.8 million annually.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Protect working families: Establish a Hawaii EITC

Testimony for the Hawaiian Legislature's consideration
of SB301/HB385

By Sean Noble, Director of Policy & Research, The National Community Tax Coalition

13 March 2013

The National Community Tax Coalition appreciates the opportunity to emphasize the importance of safeguarding and promoting the well-being of Hawaii's low- to middle-income, working families by creating a state Earned Income Tax Credit.

NCTC's nonpartisan, nonprofit network of more than 2,400 members is dedicated to the financial security of America's working families, primarily through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). Our community-based VITA programs provide low- to moderate-income households with tax-preparation help, as well as asset-building and financial-education services – all with the help of well-trained and IRS-certified volunteers. During the 2012 filing season, Community VITA programs helped taxpayers file 1.6 million federal tax returns across the nation (more than 7,700 of them in Hawaii).

As we work with families, we see the vital, day-to-day impact of the EITC as it helps taxpayers who work hard and play by the rules, but whose low pay leaves them little to show for their efforts. The EITC helps them handle life's basics – putting groceries on the table and clothes on their kids' backs, keeping a roof over their heads and covering utility bills. Nowhere are these positive effects more visible than in the two-dozen states that have added their own, critical level of EITC help to that of the underlying, federal credit. Now, Hawaii has – and should take – the important opportunity to join those states.

Underscoring these points, we list here some of the chief ways that the federal EITC helps low-income, working families. These benefits are admirably amplified for families by the presence of a state EITC, and represent strong arguments for adoption of Hawaii's own such tax credit. **Across the nation, the EITC:**

1. **Reflects hard work.** The credit is available <u>only</u> to taxpayers who work and have earned income.

2. **Helps families to cover their basics.** Groceries, rent, and utility bills are common uses for families' EITC dollars. Another frequently-cited expense: car repairs, to help family breadwinners with the transportation necessary to get to and maintain their jobs.

3. **Is particularly important to households with children.** The amount of the credit is greater for families who incur the added expenses of raising kids. And this federal EITC assistance

was responsible for keeping an average of 3.1 million children out of poverty annually from 2009-2011, more than 14,300 of them in Hawaii. The federal credit also lessened the effects of poverty for more than 40,000 other Hawaiian children.[1]

4. **Is typically needed for only temporary stretches of time.** Families only use the credit until they can get back on their feet. Indeed, among federal EITC filers studied between 1989 and 2006: 42 percent claimed the credit for only one year at a time, 19 percent retained it for two straight years, and only about one in five kept the credit for five or more consecutive years.[2]

5. **Helps struggling families who already pay a significant amount in federal taxes.** In fact, the poorest one-fifth of Americans paid 8.3 percent of their incomes in payroll taxes in 2009, compared with the wealthiest 1 percent of households, who paid only 2.5 percent of their incomes in payroll taxes.[3] And among those Americans who owed no federal <u>income</u> taxes in 2011, about 93 percent were either workers who still owed federal payroll taxes, elderly, not working due to illness or disability, or students.[4]

6. **Helps struggling families who also pay a significant amount in <u>state and local</u> taxes.** In 2011, the poorest one-fifth of Americans paid 12.3 percent of their incomes in state and local taxes, while the wealthiest 1 percent of households paid only 7.9 percent of their incomes in state and local taxes.[5] In Hawaii, the poorest one-fifth of taxpayers paid 13 percent of their earnings in state and local taxes, compared with the wealthiest 1 percent paying 8 percent.[6]

7. **Lifts more families out of poverty than any other federal policy.** The federal EITC kept an average of 6.1 million people out of poverty annually from 2009-2011, and reduced the effects of poverty for another 21.2 million people. In Hawaii alone, the federal EITC kept an average of more than 28,800 people out of poverty each year during that period, and reduced poverty's effects on about 106,300 more of the state's residents.[7]

8. **Strengthens families' health outcomes.** The EITC is associated with decreases in maternal smoking and increases in infants' birthweights, according to research.[8]

9. **Bolsters students' education outcomes.** The EITC is associated with increases in kids' math and reading test scores, studies show.[9]

10. **Boosts the economic strength of local communities.** As families spend the money they save through the EITC, small businesses benefit. In fact, studies have shown that one EITC dollar – spent at the local level – generates as much as \$1.50 to \$2 in economic activity for the area.[10]

11. **Is important to rural Americans as well as those living in other areas of the country.** In fact, a higher percentage of rural tax-filers claimed the federal EITC in 2007 than did urban filers.[11]

12. **Helps families to begin or improve upon savings.** Many families strive to set-aside some of their EITC to work toward long-term goals or to brace for emergencies. One survey found that about 39 percent of households receiving the credit devoted about 15 percent of their EITC refund dollars to savings.[12]

13. **Has historically enjoyed bipartisan support.** The federal EITC was designed during the Nixon administration, established during the Ford presidency, and improved by bipartisan majorities of Congress working with Presidents Reagan, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama.

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[1] *Brookings Institution analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Supplemental Poverty Measure Public Use Research Files data. December 2012*

[2] *Dowd, Tim and Horowitz, John B. "Income Mobility and the Earned Income Tax Credit: Short-Term Safety Net or Long-Term Income Support." Public Finance Review. Sept. 28, 2011.*

[3] *Congressional Budget Office. "The Distribution of Household Income and Federal Taxes, 2008 and 2009." July 2012.*

[4] *Center on Budget & Policy Priorities. Analysis of Current Population Survey and Tax Policy Center data, cited in Off the Charts blog post, Oct. 18, 2012.*

[5] *Citizens for Tax Justice. "Who Pays Taxes in America?" April 4, 2012.*

[6] *Davis, Carl et al. "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax System in All 50 States." Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy. January 2013.*

[7] *Brookings Institution analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Supplemental Poverty Measure Public Use Research Files data. December 2012.*

[8] *Strull, Kate; Rekopf, David; and Xuan, Ziming. "Effects of Prenatal Poverty on Infant Health: State Earned Income Tax Credits and Birth Weight." American Sociological Review. August, 2010.*

[9] *Dahl, Gordon, and Lochner, Lance. "The Impact of Family Income on Child Achievement: Evidence from the Earned Income Tax Credit." University of California, San Diego; University of Western Ontario; and NBER. June 15, 2011.*

[10] *Author. "Dollarwi$e Best Practices: Earned Income Tax Credit, 2nd Edition." U.S. Conference of Mayors. 2008.*

[11] *O'Hare, William, and Kneebone, Elizabeth. "EITC is Important for Working-Poor Families in Rural America." For the Carsey Institute. Fall, 2007.*

[12] *Mendenhall, Ruby, University of Illinois, et al. "The Role of Earned Income Tax Credit in the Budgets of Low-Income Families." National Poverty Center. June, 2010.*

SUBJECT: INCOME, Earned income credit

BILL NUMBER: SB 301, SD-2

INTRODUCED BY: Senate Committee on Ways and Means

BRIEF SUMMARY: Adds a new section to HRS chapter 235 to allow taxpayers to claim a state earned income tax credit equal to ____% of the federal earned income tax credit amount.

Credits in excess of tax liability shall be refunded to the taxpayer provided such amounts are over $1. Requires claims, including any amended claims, to be filed on or before the end of the twelfth month following the taxable year for which the credit may be claimed.

Delineates that no credit shall be allowed in the disallowance period which is: (1) the period of 10 taxable years after the most recent taxable year for which there was a final determination that the taxpayer's claim of credit under this section was due to fraud; and (2) the period of two taxable years after the most recent taxable year for which there was a final determination that the taxpayer's claim of credit under this section was due to reckless or intentional disregard of rules and regulations, but not due to fraud. Any person who is a tax return preparer under HRS section 231-36.5(h) shall be subject to regulations issued by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Treasury at title 31 Code of Federal Regulations part 10 (2012) (with respect to practice before the Internal Revenue Service). Any tax return preparer who fails to comply with due diligence requirements with respect to determining eligibility for or the amount of the credit allowable by IRC section 32 shall be subject to a penalty of $100 for each failure.

Directs the director of taxation to: (1) prepare the necessary forms to claim the credit; (2) require proof of the claim for the tax credit; (3) alert eligible taxpayers of the tax credit; (4) prepare an annual report containing the number of credits granted for the prior calendar year, the total number of credits granted, and the average value of the credits granted to taxpayers whose earned income falls within various income ranges; and (5) adopt rules pursuant to HRS chapter 91 to effectuate this section.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2050; applicable to tax years beginning after December 31, 2012

STAFF COMMENTS: The federal earned income tax credit (EITC) provides an incentive to low-income households to remain in the workforce. The credit is targeted at households with children but the credit is also available at a lower amount to low-income households without children. The credit is based on a number of tests for earned income, investment income, number of qualifying children, dependency, etc.

Given the complexity of the credit, the IRS will optionally calculate the amount of the credit for taxpayers. The IRS reports an error rate of greater than 25% for this credit.

The proposed measure would adopt an earned income credit by merely taking a percentage of the amount that the taxpayer would be eligible for under the federal table or determination. It should be remembered that the federal EITC was established for low and moderate-income workers to offset the burden of Social Security payroll taxes that might have otherwise been paid to them but were instead paid to the federal government by the employer. Enacted in 1975 at the federal level primarily as a means of tax relief, the credit was expanded three times during the 1980's and 1990's by the federal government to boost income from work and lessen poverty among families with children. In other words, it became a tool by which the federal government undertook social policy beginning with the first expansion of the credit in 1986. It is interesting to note the date of the first expansion because that was also the year that the federal Code was dramatically restructured, eliminating a number of tax benefits such as the deduction of consumer credit interest, deduction of state sales taxes, and institution of a minimum tax for those taxpayers receiving generally exempt income. It was also the year that rates were dramatically reduced, and together with the standard deduction and personal exemption, rates were indexed.

Thus, what started out as a mechanism to "refund" payroll taxes that might otherwise have been paid to low and moderate-income workers by the federal government, has turned into a subsidy for these families. While federal policymakers have the luxury of expending millions of dollars to accomplish a social goal through the tax system, state lawmakers do not have the same level of resources.

If the intent of state lawmakers is to alleviate the burden on the low and moderate-income workers in Hawaii who claim the federal EITC, their efforts should focus on the state income tax burden as it affects these families. Hawaii has one of the lowest thresholds of the some 43 states that levy a state income tax. An income tax threshold is the income level at which families begin to pay the state income tax. Despite the reduction in personal income tax rates in 1998 and adoption of a low-income tax credit, as well as a modest increase in the standard deduction, much more work needs to be done to adjust the standard deduction and the personal exemption. Although Act 60, SLH 2009, increased the standard deduction to $4,400 for couples and $2,200 for individuals and the personal exemption to $1,144, the 2011 session of the legislature delayed the implementation from January 1, 2011 to January 1, 2013. However, that legislature did make those changes permanent by repealing the sunset clause that would have automatically repealed the increases as of January 1, 2016. The same 2009 legislation also raised income tax rates on higher income individuals and the 2011 legislation placed limits on the deductibility of state income and sales taxes as well as the overall amount of itemized deductions for high-income individual income taxpayers.

While advocates point to a variety of national articles that hail the EITC as a means of helping the poor out of poverty and encouraging the poor to go to work, they miss the point that taking a percentage of the federal amount bears no relationship to the tax burden imposed by the state. Thus, the EITC amounts to nothing more than a back door welfare program, handing out money merely because a person falls into a low-income category and has joined the workforce with a dependent or two. So while welfare advocates may point to tomes of literature that praise the EITC as a way to lift the poor out of the abyss of poverty, there is just as much material that decries the EITC as poor tax policy and one that is fraught with errors and compliance difficulties. In other words, if the poor are to be helped, don't do it through the tax system as there is very little transparency and accountability. And despite claims that many of these problems have been resolved, there is general agreement from administrators and practitioners that this is one of the most difficult and complicated federal tax credits with which to administer and comply, with increasing errors and inaccuracies.

Like many of the targeted tax credits aimed at encouraging business activities, the EITC comes with all of the problems outlined with those targeted business tax credits. There is no oversight as to how these refunds are aiding families, whether or not outcomes are being achieved or for that matter whether a family is getting sufficient assistance to actually leave the welfare rolls and become self-sufficient. As a recent study reported, nearly one-third of Hawaii's families are not self-sufficient. What will the EITC do for those families who are working two or three jobs to make ends meet but, as a result, make too much money to qualify for the EITC? Where is the tax relief for those families? Lawmakers can make much more of a difference by making the needed structural changes to the state income tax rates and brackets and by boosting the standard deduction. Again, one must ask what is the relationship between taking a percentage of the federal credit amount and the amount of state tax burden relieved?

Lawmakers should also consider the interaction of a state tax credit that produces negative income and how that will affect the amount of income that would then be exposed to the federal rate structure. There are comprehensive studies on the interaction of the credit with the overall federal income tax system. Adopting the credit willy-nilly for state tax purposes may disrupt the incentive to remain employed or to increase the number of hours worked. It should be noted that an EITC had not been recommended by the 2005-2007 Tax Review Commission nor did the latest Commission even consider it. The 2005-2007 TRC examined the effects of what would have happened if an EITC was enacted equal to 20% of the federal EITC in 2006. Based on 2003 tax returns, the staff of the tax research and planning office of the department of taxation found that fewer than half of the Hawaii resident income tax returns would have benefitted from a Hawaii EITC. Of the 308,652 returns with AGI of under $30,000, only 68,845, or 22.3%, claimed the federal EITC. They also estimated that there would be a $23.2 million decline in tax collections if an EITC were adopted.

Lawmakers should understand that by taking a percentage of a number calculated at the federal level, they are surrendering their oversight of this tax policy to Congress. What is even scarier is that Congress could choose to substantially increase the amount of the credit such that the result at the state level may mean a huge unexpected impact on state resources. Such is the case with the state inheritance taxes which were tied into the tax credit offered under the federal law which calculated an amount the federal government assumed the state took in death taxes. However, this provision was eliminated by EGTRRA in 2001, phasing out the state death tax credit completely over four years so that Hawaii had no tax on inheritance and estates. The tax on inheritance and estates was reinstated after a six-year hiatus.

Finally, where would the revenue loss generated by this credit be taken? Which programs would be cut or not funded at all? What is known in the social services community is that unless the poor are given the tools and skills to become self-sufficient they will remain on welfare. The funds lost in this tax credit program would be far better spent on services that assist those, especially in public housing, in gaining the skills they need to hold gainful employment, provide child care so that those who need to go to work will have childcare and learn how to manage what money they earn. Without these skills, merely subsidizing their earned income with a tax credit will not hold a promise of self-sufficiency. Rather than duplicating the federal earned income tax credit, the state should use its resources to instead complement the effort with more skill building and family support so these families can hold gainful employment. Thus, advocates must weigh the consequences of taking revenues from these capacity building programs against doling out the Earned Income Tax Credit based on some federal number that bears no relationship to the tax burden imposed by state taxes.

Instead of looking for a quick fix like the Earned Income tax Credit, advocates should instead turn their attention to a long-overdue adjustment of the standard deduction and personal exemption as well as the adjustment of the income tax rates and brackets. Hawaii has been consistently criticized in recent years for having one of the lowest thresholds before income tax rates are imposed. Increasing that threshold will not only help those at poverty level, but the bump will ripple through all income classes and there is no doubt that even middle-income families have suffered from the lack of continued adjustment of income tax rates and brackets.

Lawmakers must also understand that whether the adjustment of the standard deduction, personal exemption and rates and brackets is pursued or the Earned Income Tax Credit is adopted, there will be a loss of revenue, a loss that must be borne with concurrent reductions in spending. So, lawmakers also need to address the spending side of the ledger as well. Will the reductions come in social services, education or public safety or any of the numerous programs currently provided by state government? There is no doubt tax relief is needed by Hawaii's residents, but elected officials and their constituents must accept that such relief will mean the elimination or reduction of services.

Digested 3/11/13

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 301, SD2: Relating to Asset Building

TO: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair, Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair and members of the Committee on Human Services

FROM: Trisha Kajimura, Social Policy Director, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Thursday, March 14, 2013, 9:30 am; CR 329

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 301, SD2, which establishes a refundable state earned income tax credit, and financial education to working poor.

Catholic Charities Hawai'i has a strong commitment to decreasing poverty. Poverty is clearly linked to poor social and health outcomes. People living below the poverty line are especially hard hit in Hawaii, with the highest cost of living in the U.S. A family of four in Hawaii pays 61% more for food than families on the mainland. Our cost for housing is also the highest in the nation. 75% of people at or below the poverty line spend more than 50% of their income on housing. This population is frequently teetering at the brink of homelessness. Any change to their financial situation like a decrease in wages or increase in rent will tip them over into homelessness. Increasing their resources through this measure is much more cost-effective than trying to help them out of homelessness once they have lost everything

Catholic Charities Hawaii supports a State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to help families in poverty and prevent homelessness. EITC is a direct incentive for low income workers since it targets workers with families. <u>Funding for education on this benefit is also critical</u> to reach those who are most in need. Many low-income earners in Hawaii may have low literacy levels or limited English and need education to understand and apply for the EITC. Funding the financial education and tax workshops is important to ensure those most in need can take advantage of this tax credit.

25 states and the District of Columbia already have enacted a state EITC. The federal EITC has been in existence for 37 years. Over time, it has helped millions of families escape the burdens of poverty. Studies of the federal experience have also shown that workers who receive the EITC immediately spend the money on daily necessities which adds money to the local economy.

We thank you for your concern and dedication to helping the working poor in our community. **We urge your support for SB 301** . Please contact me at (808)527-4810 or trisha.kajimura@catholiccharitieshawaii.org if you have any questions.

Catholic Charities USA

CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808)527-4810 • trisha.kajimura@CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org

United Way
Aloha United Way

HAWAII CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
6301 Pali Highway
Kaneohe, HI 96744-5224

ONLINE SUBMITTAL
Hearing on Thursday, March 14, 2013
Conference Room 329

DATE: March 12, 2013
TO: House Committee on Human Services
Rep. Mele Carroll, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
From: Walter Yoshimitsu, Executive Director
Re: Support for SB 301 SD2 Relating to Asset Building

Honorable Chair and members of the House Committees on Human Services, I am Walter Yoshimitsu, **representing the Hawaii Catholic Conference**. The Hawaii Catholic Conference is the public policy voice for the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii, which under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents Roman Catholics in the State of Hawaii.

The Catholic Church in Hawaii has long encouraged members of our faith community to engage every level of the Church in study, discussion and decisions about how the Church can and must respond to the cry of the poor. Our church teaching is clear that our "desire is that the poor should rise above poverty and wretchedness, and should better their condition in life; and for this it strives.[i]" As Christians, we are called by the Gospel to do everything we can to help those who are least among us.

The Hawaii Catholic Conference strongly supports a State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to help local families in poverty and prevent homelessness. The EITC is a direct incentive for low income workers since it specifically addresses workers with families. Our understanding, however, is that there may be a low level of literacy and English speaking skills among these groups of people so it is imperative that an effort to provide education on the application process for the EITC be added to the discussion.

Raising the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in Hawaii for the lowest wage-earners in the state, promotes the human dignity of each person and provides much needed tax relief, thereby empowering them to rise against the cycle of poverty. The EITC will encourage a better work ethic, reduce poverty, and allow those struggling financially in our state to meet their basic needs. The goal of empowering these people, especially families, to raise themselves out of the cycle of poverty, is one that has long been supported by the Catholic Church and many other faith communities.

Thank you for supporting this bill. Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

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[i] ***Rerum Novarum*** -'Condition of Labour' (1981), paragraph 23

6301 Pali Highway • Kaneohe, HI 96744-5224 • Ph: 808-203-6735 • Fax: 808-261-7022
E-mail: wyoshimitsu@rcchawaii.org | hcc@rcchawaii.org | www.catholichawaii.org

Aloha United Way

200 N. Vineyard Blvd., Suite 700
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817-3938
Telephone (808) 536-1951
Fax (808) 543-2222
Website: www.auw.org

Cover Sheet

Testifying Agency: Aloha United Way
Kim Gennaula, President & CPO
Norm Baker, Vice President & COO

Representative Committee on Human Services
Rep. Mele Carroll, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 14, 2013 at 9:30 A.M.

Conference Room 329

SB 301, SD2: Relating to Asset Building - Testimony in Strong Support

Aloha United Way

200 N. Vineyard Blvd., Suite 700
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817-3938
Telephone (808) 536-1951
Fax (808) 543-2222
Website: www.auw.org

United Way
Aloha United Way

March 8, 2013

Representative Committee on Human Services
Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Thursday, March 14, 2013 at 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329

SB 301, SD2: Relating to Asset Building - Written testimony in SUPPORT

Dear Chair Carroll, Vice Chair Kobayashi and Committee Members:

Aloha United Way strongly encourages your favorable consideration of SB 301 which establishes a refundable state earned income tax credit.

In January 2009, The Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism published a report titled “Self-Sufficiency Income Standard – Estimates for Hawaii 2007”. This report looks at the critical issue of family and individual self-sufficiency. DBEDT defines self-sufficiency as the ability to meet basic needs without government or other subsidies. The report clearly shows the impact of the ever-increasing cost of living in Hawaii on a workforce as fully 24.8% of Hawaii’s families have inadequate income to be self-sufficient.

The federal earned income tax credit has proven to be the most efficient and effective way of providing tax relief to low income working families. This credit has lifted over 4.4 million Americans out of poverty every year. SB 301 establishes a state earned income tax credit modeled after the federal credit and sets the state credit at 20% of the federal credit. While our current “income-support” based welfare system is important to ensure our most needy are cared for, moving families from support to self-sufficiency requires a comprehensive set of asset building strategies – and a state earned income tax credit and the associated financial education is a powerful tool to target those who are emerging from reliance on state support programs. In addition, a state EITC would put needed consumer dollars into our economy at this critical time.

SB 301 provides an excellent start on a comprehensive set of programs that will eventually enable more of our citizens to enjoy a self-sufficient life and Aloha United Way strongly encourages favorable consideration of this important legislation

Sincerely,

Kim Gennaula

Kim Gennaula
President & Chief Professional Officer

Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development
677 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 702 Honolulu, HI 96813
Ph. 808.550.2661 Fax 808.534.1199
Email info@hacbed.org www.hacbed.org

HACBED

Community Voice, Collective Action

Date: February 26, 2013
To: Senator David Y. Ige, Chair, Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice-Chair, and members of the Committee on Ways and Means
From: Brent Kakesako, Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development (HACBED)
Re: Strong Support for SB 301 SD 1

Aloha Senator Ige and Senator Kidani,

The Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development (HACBED) strongly supports SB 301 SD 1, which establishes a refundable state earned income tax credit (EITC). HACBED was established in 1992 as a nonprofit statewide intermediary to address social, economic, and environmental justice concerns through community-based economic development and asset building strategies. We advance our mission with core competencies in the areas of community and organizational capacity building, community and economic development planning, and asset policy development and advocacy. HACBED played a facilitating role in the State Asset Policy Task Force and was a key contributor to the State Asset Policy Road Map. HACBED also facilitates the Family & Individual Self-Sufficiency Program (FISSP), which administers the Internal Revenues Services' Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program as a part of its larger asset building and financial education initiatives for needy families. As such, HACBED strongly supports the proposed bill that would enact a state EITC, which would be calculated as a percentage of what the taxpayer already qualifies for as based on the federal EITC. SB 301 SD 1 would also require the Department to offer financial education to TANF applicants and recipients -- most of whom would qualify for federal and state EITCs

The Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (FESS) further depicts the obstacles that Hawai'i families are facing. The FESS measures the amount of money that individuals and families require to meet their basic needs without government and/or other subsidies and the data shows the following percentage of families who fall below the self-sufficiency standard statewide:

- 25.9% of families with two adults and two children;
- 77.3% of single-adult families with one child; and
- 74.3% of single-adult families with two children.

A state EITC would provide an immediate lift for these families to pull themselves out of a financial crisis, smooth out fluctuations in family finances, and build on-going assets. HACBED's FISSP uses a network approach to administer the VITA Program with over fifty organizational partners as part of a larger asset building approach that embeds financial education in those services. Since 2006, HACBED has served 16,871 low to moderate income families, saved them $2.7 million in filing fees, helped to claim $23.7 million in refunds, and brought $12.8 million in new federal funds to the State of Hawai'i through claiming the federal EITC and Child Tax Credit (CTC). Through our FISSP surveys, families have indicated that they have used the money to manage daily expenses, eliminate debt, open and maintain savings accounts, purchase a new home, cover education costs, and start a business. FISSP also incorporates financial education tools and strategies to push on long-term and sustained family asset building to empower families by helping them control their financial situation and in the process increase their overall self-sufficiency and resiliency. The passage of SB 301 SD1 would go a long way to supplement the needs of these families with a state EITC and the financial education support would assist these families in their efforts to truly build their assets.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify,

Brent N. Kakesako
Chief Operating Officer
Hawai'i Alliance for Community-Based Economic Development

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

76 North King Street, Honolulu, HI 96817
Phones/E-Mail: (808) 533-3454, (808) 927-1214 / kat.caphi@gmail.com

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
Rep. Mele Carroll, Chair
Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Thursday, March 14, 2013
9:30 a.m.
Room 329

SUPPORT FOR SB 301 SD2 – EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

Aloha Chair Carroll, Vice Chair Kobayashi and Members of the Committee!

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies for more than a decade. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the 5,800 Hawai`i individuals living behind bars, always mindful that approximately 1,500 individuals are serving their sentences abroad, thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Native Hawaiians, far from their ancestral lands.

SB 301 SD2 establishes a refundable state earned income tax credit.

Community Alliance on Prisons stands in support of this measure. As long-time members of the Hawai`i Women's Coalition, we have worked together to support this common sense approach to asset building for our struggling families.

Many of our incarcerated citizens come from economically-challenged families and communities. The costs of food of shelter are continually rising in Hawai`i pushing more and more people to the margins of society. Hawai'i has the highest cost of living in the United States.

The federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program was adopted in 1975 to provide relief to low-income workers through a targeted tax reduction and has since been expanded several times because of is proven success at getting and keeping people working. It can only be claimed by people who earn income through work, and the credit is structured to encourage people to work more hours. People who work full time should be able to support their families and stay out of poverty.

The EITC is essential to ensuring that people who work are able to make ends meet. The EITC is mostly used as a temporary support. Three out of five recipients claim the EITC for short periods – only one or two years. The EITC is a good way to help families that experience temporary job loss, reduced hours, or reduced pay stay on their feet.

State EITCs help make sure that people who work hard are able to meet basic needs, support their families, and stay off welfare. They are a small investment that can make a BIG difference in the lives of working families
As of this year, 25 states and the District of Columbia have enacted a state EITC and nearly all 25 states calculate the value of the state credit as a percentage of the federal EITC amount.

Please help our struggling families by supporting the state EITC. A rising tide floats ALL boats!

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

HAWAI'I APPLESEED CENTER LAW AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony of Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting SB301 Relating to Asset Building
Establishing a State Earned Income Tax Credit
House Committee on Human Services
Scheduled for Hearing Thursday, March 14, 2013, 9:30 AM, Room 329

Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic 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.

Thank you for an opportunity to testify in **strong support** of Senate Bill 301, which would create a state Earned Income Tax Credit.

Hawai‘i has the highest cost of living in the United States. A family of four in Hawai‘i pays 61 percent more for food than those on the mainland. The cost of shelter in Hawai‘i is also the highest in the nation, with 75 percent of those at or below the poverty level spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing. In addition, our residents earn the lowest adjusted income among all of the mainland states, while the tax rate in Hawaii for low-income households is among the highest in the nation.

People who work full-time should be able to support their families and stay out of poverty. State EITCs help make sure that these people who work hard are able to meet basic needs, support their families, and stay off welfare. The EITC gets and keeps people working. It can only be claimed by people who earn income through work and who pay other taxes. State EITCs are a small investment that can make a big difference in the lives of working families.

The EITC is a work incentive for low income workers because it provides a direct wage subsidy targeted at low income wage earners with families. A parent working full-time, year-round at the minimum wage of $7.25 makes around $17,000 a year. Out of that small wage, they then pay 13 cents out of every dollar they earn in state and local taxes, while the wealthiest pay only 8 cents out of every dollar. A family of three living on $17,000 a year is already living in poverty and should not be paying more on their hard-earned dollar than the wealthiest among us. A state EITC would allow these low-income families to keep more of what they earn, and be an important first step toward making our tax system fairer.

It is considered by many to be the most efficient anti-poverty program in existence today because it directly rewards low income workers and avoids government inefficiencies in the distribution and delivery of services. Over the 37 years since its inception, the federal EITC has helped millions of families escape the crushing reality of poverty in our country. In 2009 alone, the federal EITC helped raise over three million children from six million families out of poverty.

As of this year, 25 states and the District of Columbia have enacted a state EITC. All 25 states calculate the value of the state credit as a percentage of the federal EITC. Studies have indicated that wage earners immediately spend income received from the EITC program immediately on bills and basic necessities such as food and shelter allowing that spending to “churn” through the state economy.

Since the state EITC program piggybacks on the federal EITC program, calculating the state tax credit is simple. A taxpayer would take a set percentage of whatever was claimed for the federal EITC. We recommend that the state level be set at 20 percent of the federal EITC payment.

If Hawai’i implements a state EITC, it will help make sure that people who work hard are able to meet basic need and support their families. It would be a small investment that will make a big difference in the lives of working families.

Again, thank for this opportunity to testify is strong support of SB301.

CS13:014T:SF

To: The Honorable Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
The Honorable Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Human Services

From: Laura Smith, President/CEO
Scott Fuji, Assistant Director of Community Services
Goodwill Industries of Hawaii, Inc.

Date: March 13, 2013

Re: **Testimony in Support of SB 301, SD2 – Relating to Asset Building**

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. With a Statewide footprint and offices on Oahu, Maui, Hilo, Kona and Kauai, last year Goodwill served over 15,000 people, placing more than 1,500 into jobs in our community.

Goodwill stands in strong support of SB301 SD2 for the immediate impact on poverty it would have for Hawaii's working poor. Goodwill's experience in working with the under and unemployed of Hawaii leads us to believe that there remains a strong impetus to work and improve the quality of life for themselves and their families. A state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) will act as an incentive for employment, not a handout, as the amount received increases with the amount of income received from work.

A state EITC will have the greatest targeted impact for tax relief that can be offered to working low-income families. For example, a family of four filing jointly with two dependents at the federal poverty line of $24,000 will incur a state tax liability of $564 for 2012. A 10% state EITC ($487) linked to the federal EITC will reduce that tax liability from $564 down to $77 and a 20% state EITC ($974) will put $410 into that family's pockets. In order to reduce that same family's state tax liability through a manipulation of the state standard deduction and/or personal exemptions would have to double in order to have the same effect as a 10% state EITC. This would result in wide-scale tax revenues lost for the state as that same standard deduction and/or personal exemption manipulation would be applied to all filers.

In addition, the tax revenue lost to the State government will not be lost to the state of Hawaii. Studies indicate that low-income wage earners spend a larger portion of their income on day-to-day survival needs such as food and shelter. The return on investment for every state level EITC dollar equates to an additional $1.67 in new earnings for the state. In times of economic recovery these are dollars infused directly into the economy to stimulate growth from the bottom up.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.

PARTNERS IN CARE
Oahu's Coalition of Homeless Providers

COMMENTS REGARDING SB 301, SD2: Relating to Asset Building

TO: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair; Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair; and Members Committee on Human Services

FROM: Gladys Peraro, Partners In Care, Co-Chair Advocacy Committee

Hearing: Thursday, March 14, 2013, 9:30 a.m., Conference Room 329

Thank you for the opportunity for Partners In Care (PIC) to provide comments on SB 301, SD2, which establishes a state earned income tax credit as well as implement financial education to applicants. I am Gladys L. Peraro, Advocacy Committee Co-Chair for Partners In Care (PIC), a coalition of care providers focusing on the needs of homeless persons and strategies to end homelessness.

Partners In Care has a strong commitment to decreasing poverty. Poverty is clearly linked to poor social and health outcomes. People living below the poverty line are especially hard hit in Hawaii, with the highest cost of living in the U.S. A family of four in Hawaii pays 61% more for food than families on the mainland. Our cost for housing is also the highest in the nation. Seventy-five percent (75%) of people at or below the poverty line spend more than 50% of their income on housing. This population is frequently teetering at the brink of homelessness. Any change to their financial situation such as a decrease in wages or increase in rent will tip them over into homelessness. Increasing their resources through this measure is much more cost-effective than trying to help them out of homelessness once they have lost everything.

Partners In Care supports a State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to help families in poverty and prevent homelessness. EITC is a direct incentive for low income workers since it targets workers with families. <u>Funding for education on this benefit is also critical,</u> which will reach those who are most in need to ensure they have the tools to help themselves. Many low-income earners in Hawaii may have low literacy levels or limited English proficiency and need education to understand and apply for the EITC. Funding the financial education and tax workshops are important to ensure those most in need can take advantage of this tax credit.

Twenty-five states and the District of Columbia already have enacted a state EITC and the federal EITC has been in existence for 37 years- over time, it has helped millions of families escape the burdens of poverty. Studies of the federal experience have also shown that workers who receive the EITC immediately spend the money on daily necessities which adds money to the local economy.

We thank you for your concern and dedication to helping the working poor in our community. Partners In Care strongly urges your support for **SB 301 SD2**.

Partners In Care, c/o Aloha United Way, 200 N. Vineyard Blvd. Suite 700
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Partners in Care is a membership organization of homeless service providers, other service professionals, units of local and state government, homeless consumers, and other community representatives located in Hawai'i on O'ahu. It is a planning, coordinating, and advocacy body that develops recommendations for programs and services to fill gaps in the Continuum of Care on O'ahu.

PHOCUSED

PROTECTING HAWAII'S OHANA, CHILDREN, UNDER SERVED, ELDERLY AND DISABLED

March 12, 2013 P13:016T:LKR

TO: Representative Mele Carroll, Chair
Representative Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair
Members, Committee on Human Services

FROM: Laura Kay Rand, Interim Executive Director, PHOCUSED

HEARING: Committee on Human Services
March 14, 2013 at 9:30 a.m.

Testimony in Support of SB301 SD2, Relating to Asset Building

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB301, which establishes a refundable state earned income tax credit (EITC). PHOCUSED is a coalition of health, housing, human services agencies and individual advocates voicing the needs of the marginalized and underserved in Hawaii.

As a community, we must support our citizens who are classified as asset poor, lacking the resources to subsist at the poverty level for three months in the absence of a source of income. Working families in Hawaii strive towards financial self-sufficiency against powerful economic realities. Yet they are working hard to support themselves and they are striving. Should we not doing everything we can to support them? Our residents experience the highest cost of living in the United States, paying more for food and shelter than comparable families on the mainland. And they pay these elevated costs while earning the lowest adjusted income among all of the mainland states and experiencing among the highest tax rates for low-income households in the nation.

With SB301 and the establishment of a refundable EITC, we have an opportunity to help Hawaii families escape the crippling effects of poverty and change their financial family tree for generations to come. The EITC will support families who are working hard toward self-sufficiency by reducing the tax burdens of the low-income population through an incentive for employment. Since most people who receive federal EITC refunds immediately put them into use through spending on day-to-day needs, such as food and shelter, the EITC also supports our local economy.

I urge your support of SB301. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of this measure.

Sincerely,
Laura Kay Rand
Interim Executive Director

200 N. Vineyard Blvd, Bldg B Honolulu, HI 96817 P: 808.521.7462
www.phocused-hawaii.org admin@phocused-hawaii.org