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LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION
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MARIA E. ZIELINSKI
DIRECTOR OF TAXATION

DAMIEN A. ELEFANTE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

To: The Honorable Jill N. Tokuda, Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Date: Monday, April 3, 2017
Time: 1:35 P.M.
Place: Conference Room 211, State Capitol

From: Maria E. Zielinski, Director
Department of Taxation

Re: H.B. 547, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, Relating to Taxation

The Department of Taxation (Department) appreciates the intent of H.B. 547, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, which creates a new income tax credit for qualified expenses in hosting a foreign exchange individual. The credit is capped at \$400 per month per taxpayer, provided that the taxpayer has hosted a foreign exchange individual for a minimum of one month. H.B. 547, H.D. 2, S.D. 1, applies to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2017, but has a defective effective date of July 1, 2051.

The Department appreciates that the previous committees addressed the Department's recommendations, including clarifying the minimum number of days for hosting a foreign exchange student and changing the earliest tax year in which the credit may be claimed. This new proposed date will give the Department sufficient time to make the necessary form, instructions, and computer system changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

TAX FOUNDATION OF HAWAII

126 Queen Street, Suite 304

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 Tel. 536-4587

SUBJECT: NET INCOME, Credit for Exchange Student Host Families

BILL NUMBER: HB 547, SD-1

INTRODUCED BY: Senate Committees on Education and International Affairs and the Arts

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Adds a new credit for expenses paid by families hosting foreign exchange students. A direct appropriation would be preferable as it would provide some accountability for the taxpayer funds being utilized to support this effort.

SYNOPSIS: Adds a new section to HRS chapter 235, to be titled the income tax credit for exchange program hosts. The credit amount is 100% of the taxpayer's qualified expenses, up to a maximum of \$400 per month per taxpayer, provided that the taxpayer has served as a host family for the foreign exchange individual for at least one month.

No credit is allowed for any amounts for which a deduction is taken under Internal Revenue Code section 170(g) with respect to amounts paid to maintain certain students as members of the taxpayer's household.

The credit is nonrefundable, but any excess of credit over liability may be used as a credit against the taxpayer's income tax liability in subsequent years until exhausted. All claims for a credit under this section shall be properly filed on or before the end of the twelfth month following the close of the taxable year for which the credit may be claimed. Failure to comply with the foregoing provision shall constitute a waiver of the right to claim the credit.

Defines "foreign exchange individual" as a person who: (1) is an international student or pupil, fellow, intern, including those who are participants in an intern exchange or student exchange program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State; and (2) holds a valid F-1, J-1, or M-1 visa, issued by the United States Department of State.

Defines "host family" as a taxpayer who provides room and board to maintain a foreign exchange individual for a minimum of thirty days; provided that the room and board is provided on a voluntary basis with no remuneration.

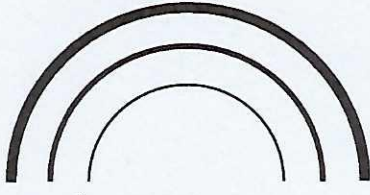
Defines "qualified expenses" as expenses incurred by a taxpayer solely and directly as a result of the taxpayer acting as a host family to a foreign exchange individual, except for amounts paid by a taxpayer: (1) to maintain a relative of the taxpayer as a member of the taxpayer's household, regardless of whether or not the relative of the taxpayer otherwise fulfills the requirements of a foreign exchange individual; or (2) for which the taxpayer receives any money or other property as compensation or reimbursement for maintaining the foreign exchange individual in the taxpayer's household.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2051, and applies to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2017.

STAFF COMMENTS: This credit provides a dollar-for-dollar reimbursement of the taxpayer's "qualified expenses," up to a maximum of \$4,800 per year. Qualified expenses are defined vaguely, and may prove difficult or impossible to audit. Avoidance of inflated or fraudulent claims may be a real concern.

As with any other tax credit, this measure makes it very difficult to track the true cost of the incentive, and to ensure that the revenue forgone is in accordance with the fiscal priorities of the State. To ensure accountability and transparency, it is preferable to appropriate the money and disburse it to the individuals who are considered worthy of it.

Digested 4/1/2017



International Hospitality Center

224 Queen Emma Square • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 • (808) 521-3554
ihc@priory.net • www.ihchawaii.org

TESTIMONY for HB 547
March 31, 2017

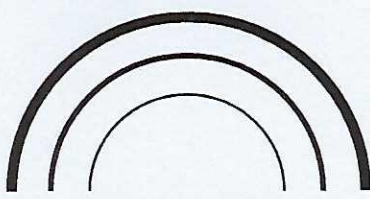
As Executive Director of the International Hospitality Center, Hawaii's community based, volunteer international educational and cultural exchange organization since 1976, I oversee and am personally responsible for the recruitment, training, counseling and support of a Statewide network of hosts who welcome J-1 United States Department of State government scholarship grantees (high school, university, graduate and mid-career adult professionals) as well as F-1 visa exchange students who are placed for homestays from one month to semester or academic year in volunteer host homes. International participants are placed with Volunteers who receive No Remuneration while providing room, meals, participation in host activities, frequent transportation etc. at host personal expense. IHC Volunteers reside Statewide and have served as hosts in some cases for more than 25 years. As Host and Exchange Participant Testimony submitted to the Committee will verify, the educational and cultural enrichment, long term connections and financial benefits brought to Hawaii are immeasurable. IHC Volunteers serve as person to person diplomats, donating their time, energy, hospitality, and personal resources to ensure appropriate attention as assistance to international participants who are guests of the United States government.

We request the Senate Ways and Means Committee's approval of HB 547 to encourage and maintain the recruitment of volunteers in the State of Hawaii, while recognizing the outstanding services performed by Volunteers statewide. Now more than ever the Spirit of Aloha, the watchword of Hawaii, needs to be assured for those regarded as the Future and Current Leaders of their countries. Over the past 40 years, IHC Hosts have welcomed over 2,000 international participants representing 43 countries, who have resided with Hawaii Un-Remunerated Hosts for one to 10 months. At this time, academic year 2016-2017 some 59 grantees from Armenia, Austria, Australia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Gaza (Palestine) Georgia, Germany, France, Malaysia, Moldova, Mozambique, Nigeria, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania and Ukraine are placed with Volunteer Hosts under the auspices of the International Hospitality Center. (In addition, IHC provides educational and cross cultural programs for over 1000 international participants per year in programs involving short term stays of a few days to a few weeks.)

I would like to thank the members of the Committee for your time and attention to this matter and urge the passage of HB 547 during the current 2017 session. Should there be a need for additional information, we would be most happy to provide pertinent information. Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted by:

Barbara Bancel
Executive Director



International Hospitality Center

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TESTIMONY for HB 547

March 31, 2017

House Bill 547 requests that Volunteer Hosts receiving No Remuneration for providing one or more months of Homestay for J-1 or F-1 Visa participants/students including room, meals, involvement in host activities, etc., be allowed a tax credit of \$400 per month. In support of HB 547 we ask that the Senate Ways and Means Committee consider the following information in evaluating the request for a \$400 per month tax credit:

1. The number of Volunteer Hosts in the State of Hawaii hosting J-1 and F-1 Visa participants for one or more months and receiving No Remuneration is estimated at this time to be less than 250 Hosts per year under all sponsoring organizations and academic institutions. The International Hospitality Center involves approximately 50 hosts for 1 -10 hosts annually.
2. Volunteer Hosts are providing Room and meals without Remuneration estimated to be equivalent to \$1,500-1,800 per month, the current charges for Commercial Housing Organizations providing room and meals with paid hosts.
3. In addition to providing room and meals, Volunteer hosts for J-1 and F-1 participants provide far more as they include the participant in family activities, transportation, community events, extracurricular activities, holiday celebrations etc. These Host Expenses are estimated between \$300 - 600 per month, in addition to room and meals noted above.
4. Volunteer Hosts are providing \$1,800 to \$2,400 per month in out of pocket expenses for a participant....Thus the request for tax credit of \$400 seems an appropriate amount and justified.
5. Furthermore, it should be noted that the presence of J-1 and F-1 international participants in the State of Hawaii generates considerable income to the State and corresponding Tax revenues to the State. Participants purchase such items as school supplies, clothing, personal incidentals, entertainment, souvenirs, etc.
6. J-1 and F-1 participants are also generally required to provide Community Service. International Hospitality Center participants provide a minimum of 40 hours volunteer community service per academic year, but many complete well over 100 hours of service.
7. As a direct result of the exchange experience in Hawaii, many participants return for visitation including friends and family and as visitors/entrepreneurs, thus generating much needed income many years following the educational and cultural exchange programs.

We deeply appreciate the review of the above statistics as the Ways and Means Committee consider House Bill 547. Should there be a need for additional information, we would be most happy to respond to any request.

Submitted by:

Barbara Bancel
Executive Director

To: Ways and Means Committee, Hawaii State Senate

Re: House Bill 547 (related to tax credits for exchange program host families)

Dear Senators,

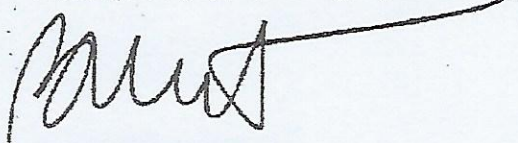
Thank you for reviewing my testimony in support of House Bill 547. My name is Bernadette Centeio. I am a social worker, mother, and Big Island resident. For the 2016-17 school year, our family has had the privilege of hosting a 16 year old exchange student from Lithuania, who attends Parker School with our 13-year old son. We are a very middle-class family, living in Waimea.

As you might guess, we learn a lot about each other's culture in day-to-day living: what we eat, how we spend our free time, with whom we interact in our community. Paulius was shocked on his first day here to learn that we always leave a lot of shoes outside our front door, and that they never get stolen! These small things, though, are part of a much more important exchange. Paulius will return to Lithuania having lived through America's election of Donald Trump. He will have heard us discuss what a peaceful transition of power means, and he will have experienced that first-hand here in America, while also observing what peaceful protest means. Our family has learned what it means, and how it feels to citizens, when a country has more than one Independence Day; when independence might be lost to a more powerful neighboring force. I've thought many times about the impact on Paulius' family of having more than one great-grandparent sent to Siberia.

Paulius has made great use of his time here: he has participated in cultural events like an island-wide celebration of Lono, and the Ironman; he's volunteered in our community garden and at school events for multiple hours. He's paddled and had fun doing power-lifting. He's visited the Mauna Kea observatories, Halema'uma'u, and camped at our beautiful beaches. He is an avid sports fan at Parker School events, and proudly shares cheers and chants from his native land while learning native Hawaiian chants and cheering in an All-American way as well. He will leave our home and community with the warmest and most realistic memories of his time here.

I should probably mention that our son is at Parker School on a scholarship; we wouldn't be able to afford it without that help. So, it is no small thing for us to feed and house a strapping 16-year-old for a year! We've had to change the way we budget for food and entertainment in order to absorb him into our family. The financial pinch is worth it, but it has created some struggles along the way. Even a small tax credit would be a benefit, not only for the actual financial relief, but for the very concrete reinforcement it would provide families like ours: we are, and we create, ambassadors of Hawaii and of America. Many families would feel grateful for the acknowledgement of their endeavor.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of this bill.



Bernadette U Centeio
64515913 KINDHOU ST
KAMUELA, HI 96743

House Bill 547 Written Testimony

Submitted by:

Gary A. Dias

1314 Akele Street

Kailua HI 96734

Home/Cell Telephone: 292-5278

Thank you for allowing this testimony.

My wife and I are a Host Family for the International Hospitality Center, and we currently have 2 young women from Estonia and Austria. Following is a list of what we provide to these young women at no expense to them or their families:

- Housing
- Three meals a day
- As much snacks as they desire
- Laundry
- No expense when we eat at restaurants
- Visiting locations around Oahu
- Transportation via our vehicle to and from school
- Transportation via our vehicle to and from school sporting practice and events.
- Minor school fees
- School supplies

I'm certain I left something out.

Following is a list of expenses that we incur when we provide the above items to the young exchange students:

- Additional home electrical expense
- Additional home water expense
- Additional vehicle gas expense

Please note that we are not compensated for these expenses.

Having these children participate in this program is a wonderful way to bring about a better understanding and acceptance of a global culture. The people of the planet earth are widely diverse, but we are, nevertheless, one people. Our differences because we live in different countries gives us a wonderful diversity.

However, I'm sure you understand there sometimes may be differences and disagreements between our government and the governments of other countries. What better way to bring harmony to our different opinions than for our world

youth to experience other cultures, countries, and beliefs than to come into our lives and get to know us as human beings rather than just the ugly American.

Now more than ever....a time when some people in our world are not appreciated, this program can serve to minimize future discord between the youth of different nations.

As you are aware, Hawaii is one of the many states that welcome diverse people from around the planet.

Bringing children in under programs like the International Hospitality Center develops well rounded young people who may grow up with the Hawaiian spirit of acceptance and aloha.

But, this can only happen if Hawaiian Families volunteer to take these children in.

My wife and I do so with a spirit of great welcoming and support. And we do so without asking for reimburse for our expenses.

House Bill 547 will help us continue to support the Hawaiian spirit of acceptance and aloha to all the people of the world and especially to children participating in programs like the one I've described.

As a citizen and constituent of our Hawaiian elected officials, I urge you to pass House Bill 547.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express my views.

Gary A. Dias
March 31, 2017

My name is Rohna Hartenstein. My family and I have lived in Hawaii for over 47 years and for more than 30 of those my husband and I have volunteered to host international exchange students in our home. Some of these have been short term stays ranging from 6 weeks to 6 months. In the last 15 years we have hosted high school students for the full academic year, from August to end of school the following year in May or June. A few of our students have attended the university, but the majority have been between the ages of 15 to 18 and have attended the local high schools.

When we welcome a new student into our home they become a part of the family and we consider them our new son or daughter and our own sons and their families become their "host" siblings. They participate in all of our family activities, holidays and religious celebrations. We provide their own room and all meals, take them to restaurants, movies, special events. We support their school activities, bringing snacks for their team and cheering them on.

At last count, I believe we have hosted well over 38 students representing more than 30 countries. We have sons and daughters all over the world. We still maintain communications by email and social media and letters with most of them, following them as they grow up and marry and have families of their own – There's no telling how many "grandchildren" we have now.

With the direction and guidance of Mrs. Barbara Bancel, director of the International Hospitality Center, the experience of meeting these students from all over the world has been exhilarating and rich for us and our family. We have learned about their countries, their cultures and customs and we have shared ours with them and their families. Along with their studies in math and sciences, the students learn about our history and government. They are required to participate in community service activities and we encourage them to earn their certificate for 100+ hours of volunteering in the community. They make presentations about their home country to their classes and to various professional and business organizations. As their host parents, we support them, counsel them and keep them safe.

Our participation has always been voluntary. We receive no payment for any of the costs. The students receive a nominal stipend through their sponsoring program to help defray some of their personal expenses, but the majority of financial support for their stay is borne by us as the host parents. Any of you who have families or are raising children certainly know that it can be expensive. While we agree to take on this responsibility each year, some recognition or relief would be welcomed and appreciated.

Thank you for considering this bill. I will be attending the hearing so I welcome any questions you may have for me.

Respectfully and with Aloha,

Rohna Hartenstein

47-455 Lulani Street

Kaneohe, HI 96744

Ph: 808-239-8660 Email: rohna@hawaii.rr.com

Jim and Lori Williams
45-025 Mahalani Circle
Kaneohe, HI 96744
Jwilliams02@hawaii.rr.com – 808-779-2208

March 31, 2017

State of Hawaii Senate Office
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Senate Committee Members of the Ways and Means Department

My husband and I are writing to you in support of House Bill 547. While my husband I are not able to attend to this important meeting due to work commitments at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hawaii, we are providing this letter as testimony to support the bill.

My husband and I have had the great pleasure in hosting several international exchange students in our home. The learning, social and cultural experiences for both us and the students have been an amazing experience. We are very privileged to work with the International Hospitality Center in support of this experience, but one small addition to this program would be greatly appreciated and that is support of the tax credit HB 547.

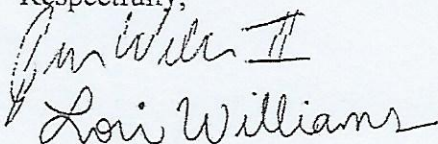
Support of the tax credit would help offset some of the cost for food, lodging and the multitude of educational and recreational places we take the students to as well as numerous local functions. Our goal is to expose students as much as possible to the Hawaiian culture, its hospitality and the beauty of the island. Additionally, we take our exchange students to historical military sites to help teach students that the United States is a country of peace, land of opportunity and supports freedom not just for its citizens, but for all people worldwide. This is a great message for students to take back to their homeland.

The cost of providing these extra eye opening experiences can be a tad pricey and that is why a \$400.00 tax credit would be greatly appreciated. As you know, the cost of living in Hawaii is extremely expensive and any type of financial relief would be much appreciated.

In closing, I am honored to work with the International Hospitality Center. This center is extremely effective in connecting local families with exchange students across the globe that encourages and supports positive, healthy and meaningful cross-cultural relationships. Therefore, my husband and I strongly urge the committee to move forward and pass House Bill 547.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lori Williams". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Respectfully,".

Jim and Lori Williams

Hello, my name is Eyleen Busch. I am 16 years old and from Germany. I have the opportunity to be an exchange student for 10 months here on Hawaii and to be a student at St. Andrew's School.

Before coming here I sincerely wished to spend a year abroad, specially on Hawaii. By a German Company in Bonn my school was quickly found in Honolulu.

But it took several months to find a family who was willing to accept a foreign student for almost one year. My parents and me, we were very happy that my host family and their daughter Emily of my age invited me to stay with them.

Arriving at the airport of Honolulu, I was really surprised how heartily the whole family, especially Emily, welcomed me.

During these first six months with my host family they have readily taken care of my everyday needs and I am glad I have a room of my own. My host parents were so kind to take me for trips in and around Honolulu, the whole Isle and to enjoy the interesting Hawaiian culture and wonderful nature. They allowed me to see and learn such a lot here, which no one could ever teach me in Germany. I even had the opportunity to go with my host family on a Thanksgiving trip to Washington DC., Philadelphia and New York City with the „All State Marching Band“, because my host sister is a member of this Band.

With all this experience and engagement of a host family for young people, I would appreciate that these families would get a benefit in form of tax reduction by the state.

We children are your future.

From: Melinda Wood <mwood17@hawaii.rr.com>

Subject: HB547

Date: March 31, 2017 at 6:18:37 PM HST

To: HI State Legislature

I am testifying as a private citizen in support of HB547. I have been a volunteer host family through the International Hospitality Center (IHC) for about 15 years now. I've hosted teachers of English from Japan and Korea who come here to learn new teaching skills; UH students from Norway and Okinawa; high school girls from Germany, Denmark, Turkmenistan, and Okinawa; and professional fellows from Turkey, Moldova, Indonesia, and Armenia. Each of these experiences has enriched my life in many ways and I am still in touch with many of the people I hosted.

Hosts are expected to bring their international guests into their daily lives and treat them as family. This entails providing two or three meals a day, orienting them to using local buses, showing them where to shop for bargains, and engaging with them in conversations about whatever topics they may bring up. But it's not all work; one of the best aspects of hosting is getting to be a "tourist" in our own hometown—going to beaches and Pearl Harbor, climbing Diamond Head, and all the other fun things that some families might not do unless they have out-of-town company. We even get to know other local hosts and expand our circle of friends more widely. To me, hosting is its own reward.

I also view being a host as a way to make a modest investment in world peace and understanding. I have always done it willingly but it does take time and energy. And it costs money. The introduction of HB 547 is a welcome acknowledgment by Representative Ito of what it takes to host an international visitor for varying lengths of time. In fact, when I tell people that I get no compensation for hosting, they are incredulous, asking me, "Why would you do that when it ends up costing you money?" I've answered that question above; however, I strongly believe that a \$400 tax credit could encourage more families to participate, which would serve our state well as we share our aloha with people from all over the world.

Therefore, I thank Representative Ito for introducing the bill and repeat that I am in strong support of HB 547.

Sincerely,

Melinda Wood

Dear Esteemed Members of the Committee on Ways and Means.

I am writing to state my strong support for House Bill #HB547 to be reviewed by the Committee on Ways and Means of the Senate on Monday, April 3, 2017 at the Hawaii State Capitol. While I will not be able to attend this important meeting due to work demands, I hope this email testimony can be added to the information presented.

My wife M'Liss Moore and I (Devin Alford) have hosted international students at our home for a weekend on three occasions (twice with the International Hospitality Center, another time with Sacred Hearts Academy). While it is an enriching experience for all of us, it also takes up time and is somewhat costly as we provide food and gas and given the tradition of aloha in Hawaii, we take them on excursions as well. We are usually happy but pretty tired after a weekend.

Given our experience, we are frankly blown away by and so greatly admire and respect other families who are much more generous with their time and take in international students for a month, a semester, even a year. A 400\$ tax credit per calendar month would really help out these other families that give so much of their time and foot the bill for food, gas, and other entertainment that we provide these wonderful students. To be clear, we are not advocating a tax credit for our weekend stays, purely for the month or longer stays...

I am so happy about the work of the International Hospitality Center for connecting local families with international students who want to come learn more about Hawaii and the United States and our local culture and languages (my wife and daughter speak some Hawaiian, so we make sure they learn some Hawaiian as well as English!). We feel that this is an important time to encourage positive, healthy, construction international relations, and we so admire the other families that will take in international students for month or months. We urge your committee to move forward on this bill and thank you so much for your time and consideration of our testimony.

With warm aloha,

Devin Alford and M'Liss Hualani Moore
94-1075 Kamiki Street
Waipahu, HI 96797-5318
[808-469-8478](tel:808-469-8478)
devin.alford@gmail.com

Liana Maisuradze, 16 y.o, Republic of Georgia, currently living in Kailua, Hawaii

Exchange programs sponsored by the U.S Department of State are beneficial to not only exchange students - but their host families, host communities, schools and the future generations. Students who come to the United States are ambassadors of their countries and create cultural exchange. We share our knowledge with our peers every day and learn something new from them.

Host families play a huge role in these programs. Without their hospitality and willingness to volunteer to host us - we wouldn't be here. Their contribution to the community is enormous and it would only be fair if they got a small tax deduction. Many families have been hosting exchange students from all over the world for many years. Without them and their help - a lot of people would be missing out on friends from different countries and would've lacked the cultural exchange that we all share. Exchange students also give back to the community and volunteer for over 30 hours at least. Some even volunteer over 200 hours. It's important to have us in the U.S and it we wouldn't be here if our host families weren't so generous. They contribute to the community and it's only right to give back to them as well.

My name is Lisa, and I'm an exchange student from Ukraine. I would like to contribute to the decision of establishing tax deductions for families, that host exchange students, the way I see it as an exchange student.

Host families are always doing their best: providing a student with comfortable housing, food, and transportation. These are basic things each host family needs to spend their own money for, not including additional expenses, like different extracurricular activities for the exchange student, or travelling. None of these expenses are reimbursed.

Host families are the ones, who introduce an exchange student to "real" American world, and explain democratic values of U.S, American traditions and culture. Why is it so important? The exchange student would bring their impressions about US to their home country, and share their American experience with everybody they know, make others understand American culture too, and thanks to their host family their impressions about the U.S. will be extremely positive.

The idea of hosting an exchange student brings more benefits to the U.S. than you would think! Many exchange students become influential citizens of their home countries, which means that they would try to bind to US, understanding US policy and politics.

Tax deductions is one of the ways to make hosting for many American families much easier, and as a result, make hosting more exchange students possible.

Lisa Byelikova

FLEX-student in Kailua Kona, HI

Aloha from Host Parent:

My name is Trisha Hansen and I have been a Host Parent along with Sterling Dorje, my husband, to 4 different Exchange Students over the last 6 years. Our current student is from Ukraine, and she has experienced unrest and aggression by Russia in her own country.

Why We Serve as Host Parents? We are an international couple... my husband is from Tibet and we are well travelled...having visited countries like Africa, Indonesia, Japan, Vietman, Thailand, Germany, UK, etc. we feel very strongly that building a relationship with the International community, especially young students from other countries and exposing them to American Culture can help bring peace to the world. Those students who we have hosted in the past tell us of their experiences after leaving us and how being in American has opened up their world and moved them forward. In addition, those American students who interact with International Students are exposed to a world view beyond their own community and possibilities of a future for themselves outside of their current world. In most cases, the International Exchange Students are better educated and way ahead of their American classmates... in almost every aspect of their education... This was a real eye opener to me and I would guess to the American students and teachers as well... opening them up to a different view of their own education and their view of their own world.

What being a Host Parent entails:

- Providing a room in my home with bathroom (approximate cost \$100/mo)
- All meals at home and at restaurants, transportation to activities, entertainment (approximate cost \$300/mo)

Additional Activities:

- Hosting other students at my home for organized activities like debates on GMO's
- Exposing my student and her Exchange Student friends to other parts of the island to see the volcano and untouched nature of the Big Island. Includes stay at another house for 2 more students and their Host Parent.
- Travel to Los Angeles from Hawaii for Christmas to expose her to a cultural experience of American Family Christmas and a look at the Mainland US including Universal Studios, Overview of Los Angeles coastal and inland regions.
- Plans for another trip for our student to West Coast including San Francisco, Ca. to experience life there on the Mainland of the U.S.

To the members of the Committee on Ways and Means -

I am both a long-time host parent and also a Local Coordinator for the exchange student program under the International Hospitality Center .

As you have heard from many other host families, the experience of having these young ambassadors in our homes and in our lives is most rewarding. Hosting requires a lot of “giving”, in terms of time, money, and energy — an experience most of us do willingly and in fact repeatedly. Many host families volunteer to host many times — our lives are better for it.

But you’ve heard all this from other host families. I’d like to address the issue of being a Local Coordinator. Part of that responsibility is to secure placements for the exchange students. That is the biggest hurdle we must face. Every year there are more students than families willing to host. Why? Because of the financial burden hosting places on us. It is very painful to hear that a family that would make a wonderful host say they simply cannot afford to host, otherwise they’d be happy to have a young adult from another culture live with them. And a point that cannot be argued.

The passage of HB 547 would be most effective in resolving that argument and so I urge its passage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ginny Squier

Local Coordinator

Host parent since 1997

Aloha,

My family has been partnering with IHC to host many students over the last 3 years. It has been a rewarding yet costly experience when we support a student for the school year both in time and finances. Currently we are raising three children of our own, and have taken on a fourth through this program.

Our current student has presented some extra challenges we have not experienced before with unexpected medical needs. This required doctor, lab and pharmacy costs that we are still waiting reimbursement from.

On top of her extra costs, our food, water, electric and gas bills have all increased to accommodate another person in the house. When we go out to eat, we have to pay for her too. She is an extra person we need to drive to events or give her bus fare to get there. Her small stipend only covers her school needs and entertainment when she is not with us.

Our students have been wonderful people and have enriched our lives, but more financial support would go a long way to make it easier to support another person, especially when they are with us for 10 months. Please consider passing the bill to give host families a significant tax break for each month they show aloha to people from other countries and building international friendships and relationships.

Blessings,
Rachel Hilpert

Subj: SUPPORT House Bill #HB547

Testimony to the Senate Ways and Means Committee on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 1:35 pm.

We support HB 547 introduced by Representative Ken Ito. This allows a tax credit to families who volunteer to host international, exchange students.

We hosted international students placed with our family by the International Hospitality Center. These relationships created lifelong friendships. While we volunteered willingly, we would accept the tax credit as the community's recognition that all of us together create positive relationships across borders. Aloha works in all directions.

Please pass this bill through committee and keep it going.

Respectfully submitted,

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March 31, 2017

Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair
Senate Ways and Means Committee
Hawaii State Senate #207
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96817

Dear Chair Tokuda:

I am writing in support of HB547 HD2 SD1. My wife and I have been host parents for the last seven years through the International Hospitality Center (IHC) based at St. Andrew's Priory. During the 2015-2016 academic school year, we hosted a high school junior from Lithuania who attended the Priory. We also hosted two Professional Fellows from non-government organizations (NGO's) from Turkey and Singapore who came to Hawaii April through May 2016. We will be hosting two NGO Professional Fellows from the Ukraine and Myanmar from April 24th until the end of May 2017.

We estimate there are between 100- 200 families on Oahu who are host parents. I have met them at informational meetings and they live in different areas of Oahu. They come from varied income levels- Aiea, Hawaii Kai, Kahala, Waianae, Pearl City, Papakolea, as well as Kauai and the Big Island. Ours is totally voluntary, we receive no stipend, no honorariums, and additionally act as guardians for our under age visitors while they live with us. As hanai parents we ensure our "children" are safe, integrate them into our island culture, provide varied experiences, share them with our own children/grandchildren, resulting in lasting friendships. One of our previous hanai daughters from Japan has kept in touch with us for seven years.

The opportunity affords us the chance to meet young people from all over the world from Tajikistan to Armenia, Turkey, Ukraine, Estonia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Georgia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Mozambique. The tax benefit would incentivize others in our State to participate and increase their awareness of young people in the world.

Sincerely,

Michael J Leong

