



**EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS**  
HONOLULU

**DAVID Y. IGE**  
GOVERNOR

February 5, 2020

**TO:** The Honorable Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

**FROM:** Scott Morishige, MSW, Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness

**SUBJECT: HB2707 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 5, 2020, 9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

**POSITION:** The Governor's Coordinator supports this bill with amendments, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact budget priorities.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to establish the behavioral health social worker scholarship program at the University of Hawaii, which requires recipients of the scholarship to commit to five years of service with the Department of Human Services (DHS). The bill also appropriates funds for Fiscal Year 2021 for the behavioral health social worker scholarship program.

If this measure proceeds, the Coordinator suggests the measure be amended to include the option of completing the five years of required service at the Judiciary or other State agencies in addition to DHS, including the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Public Safety (DPS). The Coordinator recognizes that multiple departments have a need for well-trained social workers to address the behavioral health needs of clients, including individuals directly experiencing homelessness. While this measure does not specifically address the needs of homeless individuals, there is a clear overlap between individuals experiencing severe mental illness and/or substance use disorders and individuals experiencing homelessness.

The Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH), a 27-member advisory council chaired by the Coordinator, recently voted to prioritize support for behavioral health reforms and programs as part of its 2020 legislative priorities to address homelessness. In addition, HICH supports strengthening the capacity of the homeless services sector through the development of a professional workforce, including individuals that specialize in the field of behavioral health.

Over the past four years, the State has developed and implemented a range of new programs to divert homeless individuals experiencing severe mental illness or substance use disorders to appropriate treatment and support. These new programs include the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program, intensive case management for homeless individuals, CARES, and the Assisted Community Treatment (ACT) program. A professional trained workforce is needed for implementation of this array of programs to be most effective.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



PANKAJ BHANOT  
DIRECTOR

CATHY BETTS  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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

February 3, 2020

TO: The Honorable Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 2707 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

Hearing: February 5, 2020, 9:00 a.m.  
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill to build capacity and develop the State's behavioral health workforce, and offers comments. DHS requests that any appropriation not supplant the current budget priorities identified in the executive budget.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bill is to establish the behavioral health social worker scholarship program at UH, which requires recipients of the scholarship to commit to five years of service with DHS. Appropriates funds.

Given the behavioral health needs of Hawaii's multi-generational families and individuals, promoting, supporting, and increasing the behavioral health social work workforce is a necessary investment in the long-term health and well-being of Hawaii's residents.

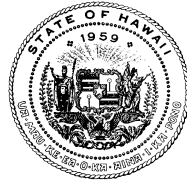
The Legislature currently contributes general funds to the Hawaii Child Welfare Collaboration (HCWEC). This is a collaboration between the DHS and the University of Hawaii, Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work, to recruit and train master's-level social work students to work at DHS Child Welfare Services (CWS). From 1998 to 2008, 100 students completed the program and became employees of CWS. Unfortunately, during the great

recession of 2009-2010, 21% of the CWS work force was reduced through a reduction and force; and in 2011 the program ended following changes in Title IV-E funding.

In 2016, the HCWEC program was refunded to rebuild the CWS work force. The program provides options to students, a two-year program or an advanced standing option for students who enter with a Bachelor's of Social Work. For students who continue to work full time, the program offers a three-year part-time option. Distance education technology allows neighbor island residents to participate from their home island. In 2017, 8 scholars graduated and another 8 in 2018. There are 10 scholars in the current class of 2019-2020.

While the priority of DHS is to increase and improve the skills of the workforce of child welfare social workers, behavioral health social workers are needed in other departments and subject matter areas, such as homelessness, assisting families with their aging relatives, assisting families involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, and in general, to assist when residents experience significant or chronic life stressors and traumas. DHS suggests that the Legislature consider that the scholarship recipients work in any of the child and family serving agencies of the executive branch, as well as at the Judiciary.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 2707**  
**RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date and Time: Wednesday, February 5, 2020, 9:00 a.m.

Room: 329

1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (“Department”) strongly supports the intent  
2 of this measure offering comments and proposed amendments.

3 **Department Testimony:** The subject matter of this measure intersects with the scope of the  
4 Department’s Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) whose statutory mandate is to assure a  
5 comprehensive statewide behavioral health care system by leveraging and coordinating public,  
6 private and community resources. Through the BHA, the Department is committed to carrying  
7 out this mandate by reducing silos, ensuring behavioral health care is readily accessible, and  
8 person-centered. The BHA’s Adult Mental Health Division (AMHD) provides the following  
9 testimony on behalf of the Department.

10 The Department strongly supports initiatives introduced by the legislature that address  
11 the need for increasing the number of trained mental health care professionals in Hawaii.  
12 Through the creation of a behavioral health social worker scholarship program at the University  
13 of Hawaii (UH), students will have the opportunity to receive tuition assistance in exchange for  
14 a service commitment with the Department of Human Services (DHS) in the areas of psychiatric  
15 and mental health, or other behavioral health social work.

16 The Department acknowledges that coordination across departments is required in  
17 order to implement a comprehensive continuum of care. We believe that the responsibility for  
18 the development of the behavioral health workforce is one that is shared not only by the DHS,

1 but by many departments. It is in this spirit of collaboration and in discussion with DHS that the  
2 Department respectfully encourages the inclusion of other departments who employ social  
3 workers, such as Department of Health, Judiciary, and Public Safety in the language of this  
4 measure.

5 The Department thanks the Legislature for its support of programs that increase the  
6 behavioral health workforce in Hawaii.

7 **Offered Amendments:** The Department respectfully asks that the language in the measure be  
8 expanded to allow for social workers under this program to fulfill this requirement at the  
9 Judiciary, Department of Public Safety (PSD), and the Department of Health.

10

11 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

12 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department respectfully requests that any appropriations made  
13 available through this measure do not supplant budget priorities identified in the Governor's  
14 executive budget.



*The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i*

**Testimony to the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness**

Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair

Representative Nadine K. Nakamura, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 5, 2020, 9:00 a.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 329

by

Jason M. Minami

Human Resources Director

Dwight Sakai

Probation Administrator

Adult Client Services Branch

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

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**Bill No. and Title:** House Bill No. 2707, Relating to Mental Health.

**Purpose:** Establishes the behavioral health social worker scholarship program at UH, which requires recipients of the scholarship to commit to five years of service with DHS. Appropriates funds.

**Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary supports House Bill 2707, relating to mental health.

The Judiciary supports the establishment of the behavioral health social worker scholarship program which seeks to increase the number of mental health care professionals, not only to address the needs of the criminal justice system but also the general public at large.

As an employer jurisdiction that employs social workers statewide who regularly work with clients who may be categorized as having psycho-socio issues and who are either already receiving or could be referred for to receive mental health services, we respectfully request that



the bill be amended to include the Judiciary with the State of Hawaii Department of Human Services as an agency where scholarship recipients may provide services.

The number of individuals with mental illness who are placed on court ordered supervision continues to increase. Often, due to their mental illness, these individuals find it difficult to adhere to the terms and conditions of supervision. This vulnerable population requires extensive treatment and service needs that traditional supervision was not designed to address. The Judiciary recognized this need and established a Mental Health Court in the First Circuit Court. The Mental Health Court has proven successful as it takes a mental health approach to the supervision of those individuals with Severe Mental Illness (SMI). Supervision of individuals with mental illness involves understanding the mental health disorders, including severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI), treatment methods and levels of care, psychotropic medications, crisis intervention, knowledge of community resources, and risk and need levels of those with mental illness.

Social Worker positions that supervise individuals with mental health typically have minimal or no formal subject matter education, training or experience in behavioral health. Having social workers with the requisite education, knowledge, understanding, and experience in behavioral health would save tax dollars by diverting clients away from prisons and hospitals, as they would be better skilled to help clients effectuate change and live a pro-social lifestyle, thereby reducing recidivism and improving public safety.

Mental health services are critical in serving our juvenile population as evidenced in the wrap around services that are necessary in treating this population. Social workers skilled in mental health would be effective in formulating a case plan specific to this population's need.

Our recent experience shows that Social Worker positions are becoming increasingly difficult to recruit for and fill. We believe that a scholarship program, such as the one provided for in this bill, may entice students to pursue a course of study in the area of social work and, in turn, greatly assist the criminal justice system and the general public by building the workforce in the area of mental health.

In consideration of the information presented above, the Judiciary supports the passage of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2707.





# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness  
February 5, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

By

Donald O. Straney

Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy  
University of Hawai'i System

### HB 2707 – RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Nakamura, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i (University) strongly supports the intent of HB2707 – Relating to Mental Health. Providing scholarship funds for students pursuing a degree in social work would serve the State by increasing the number of qualified social workers to meet mental health needs.

Mental illness is a major social and public health concern in the U.S. Mental illness is a leading cause of disability in the U.S. accounting for 25% of all years of life lost to disability and premature mortality. One in five adults in the U.S. experience mental illness, and one-half of all chronic mental illness begins by the age of 14; three-quarters by the age of 24. In Hawai'i, mental illness is a critical issue and indicates the presence of a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder.

The University would welcome financial support to assist students in social work who are effectively trained to provide mental health services to the people of Hawai'i. Professional social workers are the nation's largest group of mental health services providers. In particular, clinical social workers have a master's degree, two years of post-master's experience and must be licensed in the state in which they practice. In high-cost Hawai'i, these scholarships are critical to many social work students who might not be able to pursue higher education degrees without some financial support, and are often forced to take loans to finance their education. A preference ranking for Hawai'i residents would be considered. National statistics show that social work students with loans have a higher debt to earnings ratio than other professions.

The strong value of financial support for students is viewed within implementation considerations. There would be some mechanical problems issues with administering such a program. For example, providing aid as a scholarship that ends up having to be repaid when students do not complete the program or do not spend five years working for the Department of Human Services will create administrative and logistical issues. These conditions effectively turn the scholarship into a loan program. While the University is willing to find ways to undertake and overcome such challenges for the benefit of having this program, these are processes that must be adequately resourced. Managing such a program would place an administrative burden on the University to collect monies to reimburse the scholarship for students who do not finish their program or work for the Department of Human Services for five years. It is also possible that students who benefit from the proposed scholarship program could also meet state needs by working in other state departments that employ social workers such as the Department of Health and the Department of Education.

Identifying the appropriate agency to administer this loan collection program and providing for adequately funding those efforts may be necessary in the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



Wednesday, February 5, 2020

House Bill 2707  
Testifying in Support

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Nakamura, and Members of the Committee on Human Services & Homelessness,

The Democratic Part of Hawai'i (The Party) **stands in support of HB2707** Relating to Mental Health, which establishes the behavioral health social worker scholarship program at UH, which requires recipients of the scholarship to commit to five years of service with DHS and appropriates funds.

According to the Hawai'i State Department of Health website, The Uniform Application FY 2020/2021 Community Mental Health Services Block Grant shares much useful and pertinent information.

“Step 2. Analysis of Unmet Service Needs and Critical Gaps Within the Current System

Hawai'i faces significant shortages and distribution challenges in its healthcare workforce which impacts access to care, the delivery of care, and ultimately health outcomes. Currently, the top challenges to healthcare in Hawai'i is the challenge in recruiting and retaining professionals, such as physicians and nurses. In 2018, Hawai'i was short more than 750 physicians across the medical fields according to University of Hawai'i professor, Kelley Withy, who conducts an annual survey. This calculation accounts for a critical workforce shortage of physicians on the neighbor islands and the unique demands for medical specialties like psychiatry.

The shortage of psychiatrists across the state is especially seen on the island of Molokai where there is no psychiatrists, and Hawai'i Island is so short on mental health resources that several Honolulu psychiatrists routinely fly there in an attempt to close the gap in access to treatment. In Honolulu, where most of the state's psychiatry offices are concentrated, patient need at times outpaces practitioner availability.”

The Party supports creating a scholarship fund to increase the amount of behavioral health social workers that will be employed with DHS for a period of five years in our local communities. This program has the ability to help to address the shortage that Hawai'i has as well as encourage others to enter the behavioral healthcare field.

It is for these reasons that the Party encourages a positive vote on this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,



Josh Frost  
Co-Chair, Legislation Committee  
Democratic Party of Hawai'i



Zahava Zaidoff  
Co-Chair, Legislation Committee  
Democratic Party of Hawai'i

<https://health.hawaii.gov/amhd/files/2019/09/FY2020-2021-Community-Mental-Health-Services-Block-Grant-Plan.pdf>

**HB-2707**

Submitted on: 2/3/2020 7:18:32 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/5/2020 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Sonja Bigalke-Bannan	National Association of Social Workers- Hawai'i Chapter	Support	No

Comments:

The National Association of Social Workers- Hawai'i Chapter is in support of HB 2707, with amendments. Hawai'i is facing a shortage of social workers and we commend the legislature for wanting to support social work education and help develop new social workers.

We would suggest the following changes to help this proposed program succeed in creating more social workers. Instead of a 5 year work requirement, we would suggest a 2 year people, which would put the program on par with other programs to help develop health care workers in Hawaii, such as the Hawaii State Loan Repayment Program and the Hawai'i Child Welfare Education Collaboration.

We would also suggest expanding the state agencies that the program could serve from DHS only to DHS, DOH, the Judiciary, and DOE. Please also consider employment with contractors from these State agencies for the program.

Additionally, we would suggest that the language in the bill clarify if this proposed program would fund only Master's level (MSW) education of Bachelor's level as well (BSW).

Sonja Bigalke-Bannan, LSW, MSW

Executive Director

National Association of Social Workers- Hawai'i Chapter



## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2707: RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH (with Suggested Amendment)

TO: Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair, Representative Nadine K. Nakamura, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

FROM: Rob Van Tassel, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Wednesday, February 5, 2020; 9:00 am; CR 329

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Nakamura, and Members, Committee on Human Services and Homelessness:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support** of HB 2707, which would establish the behavioral health social worker scholarship program at the UH. I am Rob Van Tassel, with Catholic Charities Hawaii. We are also a member of Partners in Care.

Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) is a tax exempt, non-profit agency that has been providing social services in Hawaii for over 70 years. CCH has programs serving elders, children, families, homeless and immigrants. Our mission is to provide services and advocacy for the most vulnerable in Hawaii. Catholic Charities Hawaii has a long history of working in the areas of affordable housing and homelessness.

There is a great need in Hawaii for trained behavioral health workers. However, it is not only State “difficult-to-fill” positions that need an expansion of trained social workers. Non-profit organizations that contract with the Department of Human Services (DHS) for behavioral health services also are challenged to find adequate trained staff for critical programs. Non-profits also have the challenge of competing with health care organizations for this specialized workforce.

**Suggested Amendment:** Section 2, Chapter 304A, revise line 15 to read: “with the department of human services **or service providers contracted by the department of human services for services** in the areas of psychiatric and mental health, or other behavioral health social work.”

With Housing First and other community behavioral health services providing critical interventions, we need more well-trained staff. This bill is an important step to increase trained staff needed to end homelessness as well as to meet the growing needs in the overall community for mental health and behavioral health services.

Trained mental health professionals are a state-wide concern for public safety, ending homelessness, and the overall health of the public at large. We urge you to pass HB 2707, with the suggested amendment.

If you have any questions, please contact our Legislative Liaison, Betty Lou Larson, at (808) 373-0356, or [bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org](mailto:bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org).





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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2707: RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH**

TO: Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Committee Members  
FROM: Brandee Menino, CEO, Hope Services Hawaii, Inc.  
Hearing: Wednesday, 2/5/20; 9:00 am; Room 329

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support** of HB 2707, which would establish the behavioral health social worker scholarship program at UH, which requires recipients to commit to five years of service with DHS. **I also strongly encourage you to consider expanding the service requirement to include nonprofit organizations contracted by DHS throughout Hawai'i.**

Our state desperately needs social workers to address mental illness and addiction issues that often lead to unstable housing arrangements, overutilization of emergency services, and chronic homelessness. We deal with the consequences of the shortage of social workers time and time again, as we assist our clients who battle mental illness. Often they cannot get the help they need because they do not meet rigid requirements for treatment, or because the facilities and manpower to address their issues simply do not exist.


Angela Kalani, who works at our Hilo men's shelter, shared the story of a former resident named "Josiah," who could have benefitted from early access to a social worker. Josiah was a "level 5," which means he suffered from the most severe level of mental illness. Clients who are at level 5 cannot be referred to the 24-hour residential services at Mental Health Kokua, because they are considered too psychotic. **In fact, there is nowhere on Hawai'i Island that patients like Josiah can be referred for residential psychiatric treatment.**

Josiah was just about to move into permanent housing, when he had a psychotic episode and attempted suicide. "He went ballistic and broke the windows" says Angela. "This man was violently beating himself up because he believed if he punched his guts, they would explode and he would die."

Stories like Josiah's are far too common, and the ripple effects are incalculable. Imagine the trauma that would have been prevented--for the other residents, our staff, and Josiah himself-- if he had gotten the help he needed before becoming violent. Let's invest in harm reduction by investing in students who want to help people like Josiah have a brighter future. Please help us better serve our clients and our community by **passing HB 2707 with amendments.**

Mahalo nui for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Brandee Menino,  
Chief Executive Officer

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY



HOPE SERVICES HAWAII, INC.  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
357 Wai'anuenue Avenue  
Hilo, HI 96720  
phone: (808) 935-3050  
fax: (808) 935-3794

HALE MALUHIA  
EMERGENCY SHELTER  
110 Ululani Street  
Hilo, HI 96720  
phone: (808) 443-4717  
fax: (808) 934-7456

KIHEI PUA  
EMERGENCY SHELTER  
115 Kapi'olani Street  
Hilo, HI 96720  
phone: (808) 933-6053  
fax: (808) 934-0904

VETERAN HOUSING  
PROGRAMS  
21 West Ohea Street  
Hilo, HI 96720  
phone: (808) 934-8658  
fax: (808) 934-8658

FRIENDLY PLACE  
RESOURCE CENTER  
74-5593 Pawai Place  
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740  
phone: (808) 933-6062  
fax: (808) 329-6219

WEST HAWAII EMERGENCY  
HOUSING PROGRAM  
74-5593 Pawai Place  
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740  
phone: (808) 217-5560  
fax: (808) 327-2171

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Brandee Menino

**HB-2707**

Submitted on: 2/3/2020 11:30:01 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/5/2020 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jennifer Azuma Chrupalyk	Individual	Support	No

Comments:



**HB-2707**

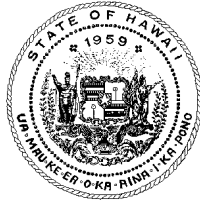
Submitted on: 1/28/2020 5:59:07 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/5/2020 9:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
John Honda	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



**NOLAN P. ESPINDA**  
DIRECTOR

**Maria C. Cook**  
Deputy Director  
Administration

**Shari L. Kimoto**  
Deputy Director  
Corrections

**Renee R. Sonobe Hong**  
Deputy Director  
Law Enforcement

**LATE**

STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

919 Ala Moana Boulevard, 4th Floor  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

No. \_\_\_\_\_

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2707  
RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH.**

by

Nolan P. Espinda, Director  
Department of Public Safety

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness  
Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Representative Nadine K. Nakamura, Vice Chair

Wednesday, February 5, 2020; 9:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Nakamura, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Public Safety (PSD) supports the intent of House Bill (HB) 2707, which seeks to establish and fund the behavioral health social worker scholarship program at the University of Hawaii and requires recipients of the scholarship to commit to five years of service with the Department of Human Services (DHS). The Department respectfully offers the following comments and a proposed amendment.

The September 2019 Brazelon Center for Mental Health Law publication identified several evidenced-based community mental health services that have been implemented on a national level for purposes of diversion from incarceration, such as Assertive Community Treatment, Supported Housing, Mobile Crisis Services, and Supported Employment. As stated in the proposed measure, there is clearly a pressing need for educated, trained, and licensed social workers who are committed to employing specialized and evidenced-based mental health services for this challenging, underserved population in our community and correctional system.

HB 2707 provides a means to address one missing component in our higher education system at the University of Hawaii and largely serves to invest in the future of Hawaii. Social Work is not an eligible discipline for the Scholarship Program of the National Health Service Corps, which administers the program through the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. While the Licensed Clinical Social Worker is an eligible discipline for the Loan Repayment Program of the National Health Service Corps, the complexity of the scoring process of the Health Professional Shortage Area does not always reflect Hawaii's needs.

As specified in the proposed measure, educated and trained social workers are needed in all mental health service areas for justice-involved individuals. The Department respectfully requests an expansion in the language of HB 2707 to allow for recipients of the social worker scholarship program to meet service commitment requirements at the Department of Human Services, as well as at the Judiciary, Department of Health, and the Department of Public Safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2707.