

Trever Asam  
Board President

Rachel Figueroa  
Executive Director



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[www.vlsh.org](http://www.vlsh.org)

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 2392  
RELATING TO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES  
Committee on Judiciary – February 3, 2022 9:30 a.m.**

CHAIR RHOADS, VICE CHAIR KEOHOKALOLE, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY:

Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii strongly supports the passage of S.B. 2392 and the recommendation to appropriate funding in the sum of \$750,000 for civil legal services to low- and moderate- income individuals in Hawaii.

In the last forty-one years, Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii has partnered with volunteer attorneys in the provision of civil legal assistance to individuals and families of Hawaii. While Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii's only office is on Oahu, we service residents of Hawaii statewide. In 2021, with only a staff of 7, Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii qualified over 1,000 individuals. Volunteer Legal Services provides legal checkups, educational presentations, clinics, brief services and/or full representations. Twenty-Three percent (23%) of those helped are homeless or at the risk of being homeless, 11% of those helped suffer from domestic violence, 8% of those helped were veterans, 26% of those helped are disabled, and 13% of those helped were aged 60 and over. If not for Volunteer Legal Services, these individuals would have otherwise gone without legal help.

Additionally, 65% of Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii's clients fall below the 125% federal poverty line, making just enough money to get by in Hawaii and not enough money to hire a private attorney. Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii is honored that its pool of pro bono attorneys ranges from large law firm partners, associates, solo practitioners, public and private agency attorneys who are leaders in their areas of practice. With over 200 attorneys we have volunteering their time through Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii, we were able to provide legal assistance to Hawaii residents in family law (divorce, child custody, child visitation, adoption, guardianship), estate planning (will, power of attorney, health care directive), Chapter 7 bankruptcy, collections, landlord-tenant, district court matters and veteran benefits issues.

In 2021, over 2,900 hours were donated by our pro bono attorneys, with services valued at over \$725,000 to our seniors, veterans, the homeless, children, and the community. Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii plays a critical role in facilitating the administrative support for volunteers to engage in meaningful pro bono service to meet community needs. Funding would restore and support general revenue funding for civil legal services in Hawaii statewide. Civil legal assistance, when used effectively can help reduce dependency on costly social services. Funding for civil legal aid services is an investment that not only provides our community with an important resource but makes fiscal sense.

We respectfully request your passage of S.B. 2392 in support of the \$750,000 in funding for civil legal assistance for Hawaii residents. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,  
Rachel Figueroa, Executive Director



LEGAL AID  
SOCIETY OF HAWAII

Telephone: (808) 536-4302 • Fax: (808) 527-8088  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 37375 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96837-0375  
924 Bethel Street • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

J. Blaine Rogers, Esq.,  
President, Board of Directors

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina, Esq.  
Executive Director

### TESTIMONY ON SB2392

Committee on Judiciary

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice-Chair

February 3, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii submits testimony in strong support of SB2392 – Relating to Civil Legal Services. This funding would ensure that general revenue funding for civil legal services is available. Civil legal services are critical in that they can provide real world solutions to help families in crisis find stability and hope.

During the pandemic, the need for civil legal services rose significantly. In 2021, we received over 19,000 requests for assistance and were able to provide legal help in a little over 8,200 cases in legal areas ranging from family, housing, consumer, foreclosure, public benefits, elder law, homelessness, immigration, language access, and child welfare. In 2021, over 30% of our clients were homeless or at risk for homelessness, over 17% experienced domestic violence and over 11% spoke a language other than English.

Legal Aid also provided critical and crucial support to the community by providing legal information on eviction, unemployment, and public assistance, areas of legal need that many in the community had never faced prior to the pandemic.

While general revenue funding for general civil legal services was not provided in FY21 and FY22 because of the economic crisis in the state, our ability to continue to provide services was only possible through federal pandemic assistance which will expire and generous one-time support through foundations. With these supports ending, this bill is critical to ensuring that civil legal services continue to be provided across the state.

This bill would help to restore the funding last provided in FY20 and we ask that funding be restored to the \$750,000 which represents the amount provided through the purchase of service contract and a directed grant-in-aid to our organization.

These general funds from the state has enabled us to provide key civil legal services and allowed us to respond to changing and emerging needs. In partnering with the community for over 70 years, we are the only legal services organization in the state to have offices on each of the major Hawaiian islands, including four offices on Oahu (Bethel Street, Chinatown, Waianae and Kaneohe) and two on Hawai'i Island (Kona and Hilo). Our staff regularly assist residents of Hawai'i to navigate and solve basic issues which require legal interventions.

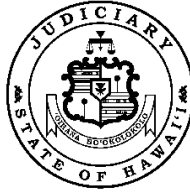
Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

M. Nalani Fujimori Kaina  
Executive Director



[www.legalaidhawaii.org](http://www.legalaidhawaii.org)  
A UNITED WAY AGENCY



*The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i*

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Judiciary**

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 2, 2022, 9:30 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

by  
Rodney A. Maile  
Administrative Director of the Courts

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

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**Bill No. and Title:** Senate Bill No. 2392, Relating to Civil Legal Services.

**Purpose:** Senate Bill No. 2392 appropriates moneys from the general fund for the Judiciary to purchase civil legal services for low and moderate income persons.

**Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary strongly supports Senate Bill No. 2392 and the appropriation of \$750,000.00 for civil legal services providers to deliver civil legal services to low and moderate income persons. Civil legal services providers including, but not limited to Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii, Domestic Violence Action Center, and the Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i, provide critical and essential legal services to the most vulnerable persons in our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 2392.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR

GLORIA CHANG  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE**  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND  
MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT (OFAM)

**WRITTEN ONLY**  
TESTIMONY BY CRAIG K. HIRAI  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
ON  
SENATE BILL NO. 2392

**February 3, 2022**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**Via Videoconference**

RELATING TO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill No. 2392 appropriates \$750,000 in general funds in FY 23 to the Judiciary to purchase the services of various non-profit organizations that provide legal services to persons who require such services but lack resources to pay for them.

B&F notes that the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires that states receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief II funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

Further, the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires that states receiving ARP ESSER funds must maintain state support for:

- Elementary and secondary education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for elementary and secondary education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19; and
- Higher education in FY 22 and FY 23 at least at the proportional level of the state's support for higher education relative to the state's overall spending, averaged over FYs 17, 18 and 19.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued rules governing how these maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements are to be administered. B&F will be working with the money committees of the Legislature to ensure that the State of Hawai'i complies with these ESSER MOE requirements.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



ANNE E. PERREIRA-EUSTAQUIO  
DIRECTOR

JOANN A. VIDINHAR  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

JOVANIE DOMINGO DELA CRUZ  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

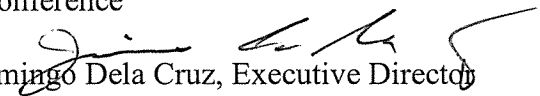
STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
**OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**  
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 420  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
[www.hawaii.gov/labor](http://www.hawaii.gov/labor)  
Phone: (808) 586-8675 / Fax: (808) 586-8685  
Email: [dlir.ocs@hawaii.gov](mailto:dlir.ocs@hawaii.gov)

IN REPLY, REFER TO:  
**OCS 22.1020**

January 31, 2022

To: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair,  
The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair, and  
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Date: Thursday, February 3, 2022, 9:30 am, Videoconference  
Time: 9:30 a.m.  
Place: Via Videoconference

From:   
Jovanie Domingo Dela Cruz, Executive Director  
DLIR – Office of Community Services

Re: S.B. 2392 – RELATING TO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES

## **I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

S.B. 2392 would appropriate \$750,000 for the provision of civil legal services to persons who have low and moderate incomes. The Judiciary is designated as the expending agency.

## **II. CURRENT LAW**

As the bill accurately notes, multiple non-profit and volunteer organizations provide quality civil legal services to persons who could not otherwise afford them. Those organizations identified by the bill include Volunteer Legal Services Hawai'i, Domestic Violence Action Center, and the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i.

The Office of Community Services (OCS) currently administers two federal grant programs that fund legal advocacy services currently provided by the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i. OCS has, in the recent past, also administered funding from the Legislature to provide legal services in prior laws such as the present bill.

## **III. COMMENTS ON THE PRESENT BILL**

OCS is an agency attached to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. We are pleased to support this bill. The people who would be assisted by this bill are members of the core constituency of OCS, which was created by the Legislature by Act 305, SLH 1985, codified as chapter 371K, Hawai'i Revised Statutes.

S.B. 2392 – RELATING TO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES

February 3, 2022

Page 2

The mission of OCS is to eliminate the causes and conditions of poverty for economically disadvantaged persons, immigrants, and refugees in the State of Hawai'i, by facilitating and enhancing the development, delivery, and coordination of effective programs for these persons and communities to enable them to achieve and maintain greater economic self-sufficiency and integration into Hawai'i society.

**SB-2392**

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 9:37:24 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Joanne Hoe	Testifying for Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Rhoads and Vice-Chair Keohokalole,

I am a member of the board of directors of Volunteer Legal Services and am testifying in strong support of SB2392.

The bill provides needed funding to organizations providing civil legal services to Hawaii's low and moderate income residents. Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii is one such organization. We assist clients at no charge with matters including family law, guardianships, landlord-tenant disputes, trusts, wills, and other estate planning, bankruptcy, and collections matters. We also assist clients through the RACS program, which allows individuals with "license stoppers" to engage in community service (rather than paying fines) in order to recover their licenses.

Hawaii's justice system is only effective when all residents -- and not merely the wealthy -- have meaningful access to it. Organizations such as those that would receive funding through this bill help to ensure this access.

Thank you,

Joanne Hoe



**SB-2392**

Submitted on: 1/31/2022 9:13:21 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Trever Asam	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Rhoads and Vice-Chair Keohokalole,

I am the current Board President of Volunteer Legal Services and am testifying in strong support of SB2392.

The bill provides needed funding to organizations providing civil legal services to Hawaii's low and moderate income residents. Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii is one such organization. We assist clients at no charge with matters including family law, guardianships, landlord-tenant disputes, veteran's benefits, trusts, wills, and other estate planning, bankruptcy, and collections matters. We also assist clients through the RACS program, which allows individuals with "license stoppers" to engage in community service (rather than paying fines) in order to recover their licenses.

Without our assistance, many residents would be forced to navigate these sometimes-complex legal issues without an attorney. This leaves these residents in limbo, unable to resolve matters that would assist them in securing housing, employment, or benefits to which they are legally entitled. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed many families on the edge and with little buffer in the event of hardship. The services of legal providers such as Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii have never been more important.

I am also happy to report that, during the pandemic, Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii has increased its offerings to clients, and has expanded remote and online services. We hope to continue these services with the legislature's financial support.

Hawaii's justice system is only effective when all residents -- and not merely the wealthy -- have meaningful access to it. Organizations such as those that would receive funding through this bill help to ensure this access.

Thank you,

Trever Asam

**SB-2392**

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 7:42:12 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Tred Eyerly	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Rhoads and Vice-Chair Keohokalole,

I am a member of the board of directors of Volunteer Legal Services and am testifying in strong support of SB2392.

The bill provides needed funding to organizations providing civil legal services to Hawaii's low and moderate income residents. Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii is one such organization. We assist clients at no charge with matters including family law, guardianships, landlord-tenant disputes, trusts, wills, and other estate planning, bankruptcy, and collections matters. We also assist clients through the RACS program, which allows individuals with "license stoppers" to engage in community service (rather than paying fines) in order to recover their licenses.

Hawaii's justice system is only effective when all residents -- and not merely the wealthy -- have meaningful access to it. Organizations such as those that would receive funding through this bill help to ensure this access.

Thank you,

Aloha, Chair Rhoads and Vice-Chair Keohokalole,

I am a member of the board of directors of Volunteer Legal Services and am testifying in strong support of SB2392.

The bill provides needed funding to organizations providing civil legal services to Hawaii's low and moderate income residents. Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii is one such organization. We assist clients at no charge with matters including family law, guardianships, landlord-tenant disputes, trusts, wills, and other estate planning, bankruptcy, and collections matters. We also assist clients through the RACS program, which allows individuals with "license stoppers" to engage in community service (rather than paying fines) in order to recover their licenses. The on-line access to members of the community has also been a great service to respond to legal problems

Hawaii's justice system is only effective when all residents -- and not merely the wealthy -- have meaningful access to it. Organizations such as those that would receive funding through this bill help to ensure this access.

Thank you,

Tred Eyerly

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

February 3, 2022, 9:30 A.M.

Videoconference

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2392**

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Committee members:

I'm writing in **support of SB 2392**, which appropriates funds for the Judiciary to purchase civil legal services for low- and moderate- income residents in Hawaii.

As a board member for Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii (VLSH), efforts to increase access to justice in our state are near and dear to my heart. Not everyone can afford an attorney, but they may be able to find help to resolve legal issues if given the right information, professional support, and assistance.

Funding under SB 2392 is important to continue valuable services for Hawaii's low- and moderate-income residents through organizations like VLSH that expand access to justice in our communities. As an example, VLSH assists clients at no charge with matters including family law, guardianships, landlord-tenant disputes, trusts, wills, and other estate planning, bankruptcy, and collections matters. Our Re-Employment and Community Service (RACS) program allows individuals with "license stoppers" to engage in community service (rather than paying fines) in order to recover their licenses.

Mahalo for your consideration and the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 2392.

Sincerely,

Melissa Miyashiro  
VLSH Board Member

**HAWAII JUSTICE FOUNDATION**

P. O. Box 4750

Honolulu, Hawaii 96812-4750

(tel) 808•537-3886 (fax) 808•528-1974

E-Mail: [hjff@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:hjf@hawaii.rr.com) Website: [www.hawaiijustice.org](http://www.hawaiijustice.org)

February 1, 2022

TESTIMONY FROM: Robert J. LeClair, Executive Director, Hawaii Justice Foundation

TO: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary



HEARING DATE/TIME: Thursday, February 3, 2022 9:30 a.m. Conf. Room 016

MEASURE NUMBER: TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF  
SB 2392, RELATING TO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES

SUBMITTED BY WEB:

**The Hawaii Justice Foundation (HJF) requests the Senate Committee on Judiciary approve SB 2392, Relating to Civil Legal Services.**

HJF provides Hawaii's legal service providers with awards arising from a variety of funding sources to help increase access to justice for Hawaii's people. HJF does not provide direct client services, but HJF has an unparalleled perspective on the seriousness of the unmet civil legal needs in the Islands and the significant efforts of the legal service providers to meet these needs. For several decades, HJF has worked in cooperation with Hawaii's legal service provider organizations.

- 1) **Funding through SB2392 will increase efficiency in the courts by helping with providing legal advice and other needed services to the numerous *pro se* ("by self") litigants in Hawaii's various courts.** District Courts and Family Courts have seen a virtual explosion of cases where people are unrepresented by counsel. The Hawaii State Judiciary has made valiant efforts to assist these litigants through information kiosks, self-help centers, and other programs. However, people representing themselves face two fundamental difficulties. First, they are unfamiliar with court procedures and forms. Second, litigants of any economic level are emotionally involved in their case, and this makes it very difficult to resolve the case without outside assistance. SB 2392 will provide additional funds to our legal service providers for services to the Judiciary, and the providers will be able to give greater information, advice, and other services to litigants. **The services provided to the Courts under SB2392 will assist the Judiciary in processing cases in a more efficient and effective manner.**
- 2) **Legal service providers are currently experiencing severe financial difficulties, making the funding under SB2392 essential.** All of Hawaii's legal service providers

face serious economic challenges limiting their ability to meet legal needs of our low-income population. We are all painfully aware of the difficulties caused by COVID-19, including both financial and service delivery functions. Legal needs of people are higher than ever, due to current economic conditions. Legal service providers face potential cuts in governmental funding sources and reduced contributions from private donations. Traditional fundraising activities, such as dinners and other formal or informal in-person gatherings, are not now available as an option to the providers. All these pressures make it critical that SB2392 be approved to provide additional funding to Hawaii's legal service providers.

- 3) **HJF's income from the IOLTA funds has plummeted with the decrease in interest rates, which makes SB2392 funding event more essential.** HJF receives funds from the Interest on Attorney Trust Accounts (IOLTA) Program under Rule 11 of the Rules of the Hawaii Supreme Court, and these funds are then awarded to various legal service providers through yearly grants. COVID-19 has resulted in a serious decline of interest rates, and HJF's interest under the IOLTA program is 1/8<sup>th</sup> of what it was as recently as January, 2020 before the pandemic. This means that HJF's ability to fund legal service providers under the IOLTA Program is severely limited under current interest rates. SB 2392 will help fill this serious revenue decline. Even with the requested SB 2392 funding level, the additional funds will not be sufficient to replace IOLTA income under more "typical" federal funds target rates of 2.0% and higher.

Your favorable approval of SB2392 is essential. Passage of this bill will be a major step toward efforts to achieve access to justice for all.

**SB-2392**

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 5:03:08 PM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
amy agbayani	Testifying for Filipina Advocacy Network FAN	Support	No

Comments:

I am Amy Agbayani, co-chair of the Filipina Advocacy Network. Low-income persons and other vulnerable persons need access to legal services. I am very grateful to our community organizations that provide these services. They have high case loads and need resources to continue their work. Mahalo for your consideration and support.



An Affiliate of  
National Justice  
for Our Neighbors

February 1, 2022

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice-Chair  
Hearing Date: February 3, 2022, 9:30 a.m.  
Via Videoconference

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2392  
Relating to Civil Legal Services**

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the Committee:

The Legal Clinic (“TLC”) submits this testimony in support of SB2392, which would appropriate funds for the judiciary to purchase civil legal services for low- and moderate-income persons.

TLC provides legal services to Hawai'i's low- and moderate- income immigrant community. Like the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i, Volunteer Legal Services Hawai'i, Domestic Violence Action Center, and other non-profit organizations, TLC provides much needed legal services to a chronically underserved segment of our community. That part of our community, already at or below the margins of what should be acceptable in our society, has been especially hard hit by Covid-19. For the past two years, the pandemic has caused severe economic, social, and other dislocations, and significantly increased the need for legal services among those who can least afford them.

While the need for services has sharply increased, non-profits face greater hurdles in their fund raising. With all the competing needs, legal service providers face potential cuts in governmental funding, as well as in foundation giving. Private individual giving is increasingly difficult, with in-person fundraising events curtailed.

At a time like this, legal service providers need increased support. We urge you to pass SB2392 out of committee to help the most vulnerable in our society gain access to justice and move us to a more equitable state for all.

Thank you.

Corey Park  
President, Board of Directors  
The Legal Clinic

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Immigration Law Clinic,  
William S. Richardson  
School of Law  
Univ. of Hawai'i at Mānoa*



**SB-2392**

Submitted on: 2/2/2022 8:00:27 AM

Testimony for JDC on 2/3/2022 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Remote Testimony Requested</b>
Joseph E Cardoza	Testifying for Hawai`i Access to Justice Commission	Support	No

Comments:

Chair: Hon. Karl Rhoads, Chair

Vice Chair: Hon. Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Committee: Senate Committee on Judiciary

Testimony of: Joseph E. Cardoza, Chair

Organization: Hawai`i Access To Justice Commission

Hearing Date: Thursday, February 3, 2022

Hearing Time: 9:30 a.m.

Place: Via Videoconference

Senate Bill: SB No. 2392

Position: Support of SB2392 Relating to Civil Legal Services

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

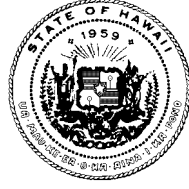
The Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission strongly supports Senate Bill 2392, which would provide an appropriation through the Judiciary for the purchase of civil legal services for low- and moderate-income persons.

Several non-profit organizations provide critical legal services to residents who cannot afford a lawyer. The inability to access essential legal services can often lead to long-term consequences. Undoing the damage done by the inaccessibility to legal services is costly, both for the individual and society in general. The impact on the community is both social and economic. Non-profit organizations have served thousands of our residents over a long period of time, but their financial support varies from year-to-year. Unfortunately, there are many residents who cannot be served because of the financial constraints these organizations face. The Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission appreciates the support the Legislature has provided in the past, and is hopeful that our low- and moderate-income residents will have access to essential civil legal services in the future.

The Commission appreciates the Committee bringing this legislation forward and for the opportunity to present this written testimony.

I do not plan to testify during the videoconference hearing on this Bill.

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR



**LATE**

CATHY BETTS  
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

P. O. Box 339  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 2, 2022

TO: The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 2392 – RELATING TO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES.**

Hearing: February 3, 2022, 9:30 a.m.  
Via Videoconference, State Capitol

**POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this measure, defers to the Judiciary, and provides comments.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to appropriate funds to the Judiciary for low to moderate income persons for provision of civil legal services.

Civil legal services can help low to moderate-income individuals access necessities and assistance, ensure safety, and help to support economic stability. Conversely, civil legal issues that go unresolved can further compound individuals' difficulty in accessing government services, housing, employment, and credit.

For more than 20 years, DHS has consistently funded civil legal services with a mixture of federal and state funds. Legal services include assisting individuals experiencing homelessness obtain vital records and government-issued identification needed to access housing and employment. DHS also funds representation of General Assistance and disabled Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/Temporary Assistance recipients before the Social Security Administration.

During the pandemic, civil legal service organizations provided continuous updates to the community on COVID-19 available programs and partnered with County and non-profit agencies to provide pro bono attorneys at food distribution and other events for those families experiencing severe economic consequences. Civil legal services organizations also worked with DHS and other non-profit organizations to address access and other issues as programs changed and offices transitioned to a work-from-home environment.

The department has worked closely with the Judiciary and other community stakeholders on increasing access to civil legal services. Likewise, DHS has closely monitored departmental procurement to ensure contracted providers offer civil legal assistance where warranted. However, more resources are needed to increase the capacity of local non-profit legal services organizations to continue to serve the civil legal service needs of Hawaii's low-income to moderate-income individuals and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.