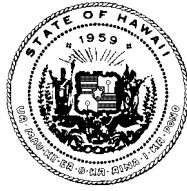


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

March 16, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director

SUBJECT: **HB 1533 HD2 – RELATING TO DEATH BENEFITS.**

Hearing: March 18, 2024, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225, State Capitol & Video Conference

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this bill so long as any appropriation does not reduce or replace the priorities identified in the Governor's budget.

PURPOSE: This bill increases the amount of death benefits paid by the Department of Human Services to cover the cremation and disposition costs for a deceased person who was eligible for medical or financial assistance at the time of the person's death and whose body is unclaimed. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD2)

The Committee on Human Services (HD1) amended this measure by changing the effective date to July 1, 3000, to encourage further discussion. The Committee on Finance (HD2) further amended this measure by changing the amount of the increase to an unspecified amount.

For informational purposes, the current amount for this type of death benefit is \$800, and in state fiscal year 2023, DHS paid a total amount of \$277,600 for this type of death benefit.

March 16, 2024

Page 2

DHS supports the increase so long as any appropriation does not reduce or replace the priorities identified in the Executive Supplemental Budget Request for FY 2025. Also, DHS prefers that any appropriation be included in the executive budget bill as a recurring expense as opposed to a bill so the appropriation could be recurring and the increase ongoing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Hawaii Funeral & Cemetery Association, Inc.
1330 Maunakea Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Written Testimony providing comments on
HB 1533, HD2– Relating to Death Benefits
Position: SUPPORT

March 15, 2024

To: Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair -Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair - Committee on Health and Human Services
Committee Members

HEARING DATE/TIME: March 18, 2024 / 1:00PM

STATEMENT FROM THE HFCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*The Hawaii Funeral & Cemetery Association, Inc. is a Domestic Nonprofit Corporation, comprised of 12 independent Board of Directors representing 14 mortuaries and 10 cemeteries that serve the largest majority of Hawaii's families. The HFCA is an independent association that acts in the best interest of its members and the community. The HFCA Board of Directors would like to **Support on HB 1533, HD2.***

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Committee Members

The Hawaii Funeral and Cemetery Association, Inc. ("HFCA"). The HFCA "**SUPPORTS**" **HB 1533, HD2** ("Bill") "Relating to Death Benefits" increasing the reimbursement to mortuaries from \$800 to \$1600.

Hawaii's mortuaries and crematories handle the cremation, transportation, storage (60 days) and final disposition of these unclaimed bodies on behalf of the State but for decades, have only received \$800 in reimbursement to cover the cost of these services.

The City and County of Honolulu Department of the Medical Examiner Annual Statistical Report shows that Honolulu County in;

2021-2022 Unclaimed remains State-assisted cremation 152

2020-2021 Unclaimed remains State-assisted cremation 116

Based on previous testimony from the Department of Human Services in state fiscal year 2023, DHS paid a total amount of \$277,600 for this type of death benefit. If the benefit amount is doubled, the estimated increase to be appropriated would be \$277,600. DHS supports this increase as long as it does not reduce or replace the priorities identified in the Governor's budget.

Mortuaries and cemeteries in Hawaii, as a result, have been covering the costs above the State's reimbursement level of \$800. The Mortuaries are also taking on the responsibility of holding and scattering or interring the remains following the cremations adding additional cost to the mortuary. Unfortunately, as costs of fuel, labor, and materials continue to rise, the industry overall can no longer sustain offering this service at the current fee. Some Hawaii

mortuaries have opted out of taking unclaimed remains. An increase of the reimbursement would help offset the cost associated with the mortuaries. The total cost increase of the adjustment in the reimbursement rate to the annual cost increase would not be significant in the state budget.

Mahalo for your consideration,
HFCA Board of Directors

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HB1533 FROM
MILILANI GROUP, INC. d.b.a. MILILANI MEMORIAL PARK & MORTUARY

TO: Committee on Health and Human Services
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Henry J. C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Committee Members

SUBJECT: HOUSE BILL 1533 "A Bill Relating to Human Remains"

HEARING DATE: Monday, March 18, 2024; 1:00 P.M.

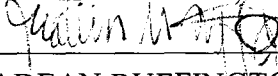
This statement is made on behalf of Mililani Group, Inc., a company doing business as Mililani Memorial Park and Mortuary (hereafter called "Mililani"). Mililani **SUPPORTS** HB1533 "A Bill Relating to Human Remains" which advocates for an increase of the reimbursement paid mortuaries for the cremation, transportation, storage and final disposition of unclaimed persons. Mililani has declined to participate in this program as the reimbursable amount presently provided is not sufficient to cover our cost for these services. We may reconsider this decision should the amount of the reimbursement be increased as set forth in the Bill.

Mililani has been engaged in the business of funeral service and cemetery operations for more than 50 years and during this period, we have been able to deliver our services in a professional and highly competent manner. Based on your years of expertise, we strongly contend that the present reimbursement is insufficient to permit a mortuary to recover its direct costs and appreciate the review of this programs to implement an increase in the reimbursable amount.

FOR THE ABOVE REASONS, Mililani stands in strong support of the proposed HOUSE BILL 1533.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

MILILANI GROUP, INC.



EADEAN BUFFINGTON,
Operations Manager

HB-1533-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 8:40:56 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rosemarie S. Sebastian	Testifying for ILWU - LOCAL 1000/SEBASTIAN'S ARCH LLC	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair, San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair, Aquino & all Committee members:

I/we are thankful for this bill as it's the most humane and respectful act of kindness for our State to bury any individual--especially those who don't have families or anyone to claim them. It reflects the true Spirit of ALOHA and the values of our State of Hawaii. It's compassionate and it's the right thing to do.

Most of those dead who are not claimed are either from homeless community and/or from the care home community. A lot of our clients from Type I ARCH don't have families to claim their bodies--in the event of death.

I/we support this bill. I/we highly encourage your committee to pass this through.

Thank you for your kind considerations.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie S. Sebastian, Treasurer

ILWU - LOCAL 1000 / SEBASTIAN'S ARCH LLC

1630 Leilani St., Honolulu, HI 96819

Tel. (808) 220-0824

HB-1533-HD-2

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 11:00:57 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/18/2024 1:00:00 PM

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mitchell Dodo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our firm is in support of the passage of HB1533, as the current benefit paid to funeral homes in Hawaii to provide cremation services for unclaimed decedents is not realistically sufficient to cover our costs.