

ACT 344

H.B. NO. 1514

A Bill for an Act Relating to Public Assistance.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. Section 346-51, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

“§346-51 Public assistance and child welfare services administered by department. The department of social services and housing shall administer public assistance and child welfare services in the several counties except for payments administered under the Federal Supplemental Security Income Program or its successor agency. No person shall be denied the right to petition the department for additional assistance as established under section [346-53(h).] 346-53(g).”

SECTION 2. Section 346-53, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

“§346-53 Determination of amount of assistance. (a) The director shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 concerning the determination of public assistance grants under this chapter. Public assistance grants shall be sufficient to maintain a standard consistent with this chapter. In granting public assistance to a person under this chapter the department may take into account part or all of the needs of the person’s dependents or those persons essential to the person’s well-being; provided that they are also eligible for public assistance. In the event that a public assistance grant to a recipient has taken into consideration only part of the needs of other eligible persons this public assistance grant shall be without prejudice to a separate public assistance grant to such other eligible persons or any of them, as may be proper to meet their remaining needs and in compliance with this chapter.

(b) The maximum basic needs allowance which the department shall initially pay a recipient considering income and resources in accordance with this chapter shall be \$100 plus an additional \$44 for each additional person whose needs have been taken into account by the department. Beginning January 1, 1978, and on or before January 1 of each odd-numbered year thereafter, the director shall submit a report to the legislature indicating the amount of additional moneys required to implement a cost of living increase for the adjusted basic needs allowance equal to the annual percentage increase, rounded to the nearest dollar:

- (1) In the average weekly wage in covered employment as computed by the director of labor and industrial relations pursuant to section 383-22, or

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- (2) In the consumer price index for Hawaii as computed by the United States Department of Labor, whichever is lowest.

The director shall request that such amount be reflected in that portion of the executive budget relating to the department. If additional funds are appropriated for a cost of living adjustment, then the adjusted basic needs allowance shall be adjusted to reflect the appropriation. The department shall pay a recipient the maximum basic needs allowance if the department determines that the recipient's needs are not reduced by the recipient's income or resources.

(c) For recipients in nondomiciliary shelter, the shelter allowance (to include rent and utilities) shall be [for cost paid, up to the maximum as provided in the following schedule:] as follows:

- (1) [~~\$175~~] \$193 for 1 person;
- (2) [~~\$215~~] \$237 for 2 persons;
- (3) [~~\$240~~] \$264 for 3 persons;
- (4) [~~\$265~~] \$292 for 4 persons;
- (5) [~~\$290~~] \$319 for 5 persons;
- (6) [~~\$320~~] \$352 for 6 persons; or
- (7) [~~\$360~~] \$396 for 7 or more persons.

(d) The director shall determine the amount of maximum shelter allowance for each recipient who is residing in a residential treatment facility. This amount shall be equal to the cost to each such facility for providing shelter to such recipient; provided that the amount shall not include any cost of such facility normally attributed to determining the basic needs allowance or for providing treatment and rehabilitation to the recipient. No maximum shelter allowance amount determined by the director shall exceed the amount under subsection (c). The director shall adopt the criteria for determining the maximum shelter allowance under this subsection by rule in accordance with chapter 91; provided that the actual amounts shall not be required to be adopted by rule.

(e) The director shall pursuant to chapter 91 determine the rate of payment for the different levels of domiciliary care provided to recipients eligible for Federal Supplemental Security Income or public assistance in accordance with state standards.

The rate of payment at which level a recipient enters an adult residential care home licensed pursuant to section 321-15.6 shall remain the same for as long as the recipient resides in that adult residential care home. The rate of payment may be raised if the recipient's condition so requires, or by rule of the department in accordance with this subsection; provided that notwithstanding the rate of payment at the time of entry, the department shall ensure that the recipient shall receive the quality of care consistent with the level of care as determined by the department; provided further that if the operator does not provide the quality of care consistent with the needs of the individual as determined by and to the satisfaction of the department, the department may reduce the rate of payment, or adjust the level of care, or remove the recipient to another facility. The department shall handle abusive practices under this section in accordance with chapter 91.

Nothing in this subsection shall allow the director to remove a recipient from an adult residential care home or other similar institution if the recipient does not desire to be removed and the operator thereof is agreeable to the recipient remaining therein, except where the recipient requires a higher level of care than provided thereby, or where the recipient no longer requires any domiciliary care.

(f) The department shall establish rules pursuant to chapter 91 for supplement payments under the Federal Supplemental Security Income

Program or its successor agency, such that a recipient's payments and benefits do not exceed the total of the maximum basic needs allowance and shelter allowance as provided by this chapter; provided that if a recipient sharing housing with a person receiving a shelter allowance from the department could qualify as an essential person to or dependent of such person, then the recipient shall be considered to live in free shelter. A recipient renting private housing or purchasing the home the recipient lives in shall receive a shelter allowance for cost paid, up to the maximum established in subsection (c).

(g) (f) The department shall pay rental and utility (to include gas, electricity, and water only) deposits once only for any person eligible for financial assistance by the department. However, under extraordinary circumstances as determined by the department, an additional rental deposit, utility deposit, or both, may be granted.

(h) (g) Any recipient may petition the department for additional assistance when the recipient's need is due to emergencies caused by seismic wave, tsunami, hurricane, volcanic eruption, typhoon, earthquake, flood, or fire determined by the director to have caused losses as to require and justify additional assistance from the State. In addition any recipient may petition the department for additional assistance for the replacement or repair of household appliances. Such additional assistance shall be paid on an emergency basis, as determined by the department, to meet the cost of replacing or repairing household appliances. If the cost of repairs of household appliances is less than one-half the unit cost of the item, the department shall pay for the cost of repairs. If the cost of repairs of household appliances is more than one-half the unit cost of the item, the department shall replace the household appliance; provided that the replacement cost shall not exceed \$350. For the purposes of this subsection "household appliances" means a refrigerator or a range.

The department shall establish an emergency fund, not to exceed one per cent of total financial assistance from state funds required by this chapter in the previous fiscal year. The director shall adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 for determining in which cases to grant lump sum payments to recipients petitioning for additional assistance."

SECTION 3. Section 346-54, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§346-54 Report to the legislature. On or before January 1 of odd-numbered years the director shall submit a report to the legislature concerning the adequacy of the basic needs allowance and shelter allowance established by this chapter.

In addition, should general fund expenditures for financial assistance and medical payment increase at a rate greater than the rate of increase in general fund tax revenues in any fiscal year, the director shall report such increases to the legislature and make cost control recommendations that will control increases in general fund public assistance expenditures. Cost control recommendations shall include, but not be limited to, the following: (1) changes in eligibility standards, (2) adjustments to the basic needs allowance, (3) adjustments to the [maximum] shelter allowance, (4) alternatives to financial assistance for meeting basic needs, and (5) adjustments to medical payment fees and levels of service."

SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed. New statutory material is underscored.

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SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on January 1, 1988.

(Approved June 29, 1987.)