

ACT 276

S.B. NO. 3123

A Bill for an Act Relating to Post-Secondary Education.

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

SECTION 1. The Federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 abolished the sixty-one-year-old Aid to Families with Dependent Children entitlement program and replaced it with a transitional aid program called the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program that requires recipients who are able to work to secure employment at the earliest opportunity. The new law places a heavy burden on the states to meet strict work participation requirements.

The federal requirements have set a laudable goal. Work is the cornerstone of the community's shared values of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency. In addition, work promotes self-discipline and self-esteem.

The vast majority of public assistance recipients share the community values of parental responsibility and work ethic, and will accept financial responsibility for themselves and their children when given a real opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency. However, many barriers to work frustrate the best efforts of public assistance recipients to join the work force on a permanent basis. Moreover, strong competition for scarce jobs often leaves behind those with little experience or education.

Over ninety per cent of assistance households are currently headed by women. Since approximately two-thirds of all women in Hawaii are working in sales, clerical, and service type jobs, which receive the lowest wages, it is unlikely that the majority of assistance households will be able to move out of poverty and be self-sufficient without adding to their knowledge and skills to increase their earning capacity.

Toward that end, the legislature finds that transitional benefits are needed to provide the necessary support to enable recipients to secure education and training beyond high school.

The purpose of this Act is to support the successful transition from public assistance to self-sufficiency through a transitional benefits program for public assistance recipients.

It is the intent of this Act to encourage the department of human services, through the financial assistance advisory committee, to work in collaboration with the University of Hawaii to establish policies that encourage the pursuit and successful completion of higher education for single parents and their children to achieve a stable future.

SECTION 2. Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“§346- Bridge to hope program; transitional benefits. (a) There is created within the department a post-secondary education benefits program, to be known as the bridge-to-hope program, for heads of households in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program.

(b) To receive assistance under this program, the single parent shall:

- (1) Be enrolled as a student each term;
- (2) Maintain passing grades or better throughout the course of study; and
- (3) Meet work activity requirements as defined by the department.

(c) Internships, externships, practicums, or any other work training required by the course of study shall count toward the recipient’s work requirement.

(d) The department shall adopt rules in accordance with chapter 91 to carry out the purpose of this section.”

SECTION 3. The University of Hawaii shall submit a report to the legislature on the expenditure of funds for the bridge to hope program to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2001.

The report shall include the following, enumerated by campus:

- (1) The amount of federal matching funds used;
- (2) The number of students who participate in the program;
- (3) The average amount of hourly pay for work performed by participating students to meet program requirements; and
- (4) The number of participating students who are unable to meet the Temporary Assistance to Needy Family program work requirements and must be excluded from the program.

SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$300,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, for fiscal year 2000-2001, for the bridge-to-hope program.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the University of Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 20, 2000.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.