



The Judiciary, State of Hawaii

Testimony to the House Committee on Human Services

The Honorable Mele Carroll, Chair
The Honorable Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

Tuesday, January 28, 2014, 9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

by

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Bill No. and Title: House Bill No. 2035, Relating to Making an Appropriation for Domestic Violence Programs

Purpose: Appropriates funds for purchase of service contracts for domestic violence programs.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary strongly supports House Bill No. 2035 which appropriates funds to the Judiciary for purchase of service (POS) contracts for domestic violence programs.

Legislative actions in 2009 due to the fiscal downturn significantly reduced the Judiciary's FY 2010 budget base by \$11.5 million (7.6% from FY 2009 to FY 2010) and eliminated 79 positions or 4% of the Judiciary's permanent workforce. Further cuts were made to Judiciary's budget base in the following two fiscal years so its budget base was reduced to less than \$133 million, or a more than 13% reduction compared to FY 2009. This necessitated significant cuts in POS contract funding for domestic violence services, as well as for other POS contracts, in the First, Second, Third, and Fifth Circuits. Some programs were eliminated while others were significantly reduced.

These cuts led to fewer services being available, fewer clients served, and longer waits to access services. They also contributed to the loss of 10 or more staff in direct service to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, resulting in: a decrease in parenting groups, crisis

intervention services, victim support, and batterers treatment; a reduction in temporary restraining order (TRO) clients served at various sites, and victim services delivered; a significant reduction in safety planning services and other services to children exposed to domestic violence; an increase in wait time for batterers trying to enter treatment and counseling services, which means more untreated batterers residing in communities, decreasing the safety of their victims and the community in general; a decrease in the number of sites available to obtain services for batterers, victims, or children – on the Neighbor Islands this often means that services are unavailable unless the person seeking services has access to a car and is able to drive many miles; increases in requirements and fees for fee-for-services, making programs unavailable to those who cannot pay; a decrease in supervised visitations; a reduction in service provider staff work hours; and waitlists for almost all services, including waitlists for TRO support and filings.

Court statistics show that from FY 2008 to FY 2013, domestic abuse protective order filings increased by more than 17% from 4,532 to 5,318, even as the availability and extent of domestic violence services were decreasing. While some relief occurred with the passage of Act 191, SLH 2010, which provided \$1 million from the Emergency Budget and Reserve Fund to the Judiciary for domestic violence services, these funds expired at the end of FY 2012 and the Judiciary did not have any other funds available to absorb this loss and thereby continue these services. The Judiciary received some additional help from the Judiciary Appropriation Act of 2013 (Act 133, SLH 2013) which provided First Circuit more than \$600,000 for FY 2014 to begin restoring POS contract funding, a portion of which was allocated for domestic violence services.

Currently, POS contract funding projected for FY 2014 for domestic violence services is some 21% or \$1.1 million less than it was in FY 2009. Most of this decrease in funding occurred in First and Third Circuits, as Second Circuit actually increased funding for domestic violence services over this period of time by reducing other POS contract funding. The \$500,000 identified in this bill would be of great assistance in helping to restore vital domestic violence services, such as victim programs, batterer services, support groups, and crisis counseling, all of which affect the overall health of the community and the State. The Judiciary's only concern regarding this bill is to ensure that because the funding amount identified constitutes an addition to the original Judiciary budget request contained in House Bill No. 1638, this addition does not come with a corresponding reduction to any items already included in our base budget request.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 2035.