



## *The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i*

### **Testimony to the House Committee on Finance**

Representative Sylvia J. Luke, Chair  
Representative Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 21, 2019 1:30 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 308

### **WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

by

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**Bill No. and Title:** House Bill No. 1452, Relating to Civil Legal Services.

**Purpose:** Establishes and appropriates funds for the Hawai‘i Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable to facilitate cooperation between various state agencies regarding civil legal services and access to justice. Appropriates funds for the Judiciary to purchase civil legal services for low- and moderate-income persons.

#### **Judiciary's Position:**

The Judiciary strongly supports House Bill No. 1452, which establishes and appropriates funds for the Hawai‘i Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable. In 2015, President Barack Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum formally establishing the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable. According to President Obama’s memorandum, this roundtable was established to “increase the availability of meaningful access to justice for individuals and families and thereby improve the outcomes of an array of Federal programs[.]”

Inspired by the federal roundtable and based on feedback received during statewide network partner meetings, Hawai‘i’s Justice for All Committee recommended the creation of a local interagency roundtable in its December 2017 Final Report.<sup>1</sup> The creation of a roundtable would help to bring together government agencies, coordinate ways to streamline government

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<sup>1</sup> See Justice for All Committee, *Hawai‘i Justice for All Project: Final Report* (Dec. 2017), available at [http://oaoa.hawaii.gov/jud/annual\\_reports/Hawaii\\_JFA\\_JFA\\_Project\\_Report\\_Year\\_1\\_FINAL.pdf/](http://oaoa.hawaii.gov/jud/annual_reports/Hawaii_JFA_JFA_Project_Report_Year_1_FINAL.pdf/).



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services, and improve meaningful access to civil legal justice here in Hawai'i. The Judiciary has representation on the Justice for All Committee and would welcome the opportunity to participate with the Hawai'i Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable once established.

The Judiciary also strongly supports the bill's appropriation for civil legal services in the amount of \$800,000.00 for fiscal years 2020 and 2021. Civil legal services providers extend a lifeline to the most vulnerable persons in our community.

For Fiscal Year 2018 – 2019, the Judiciary received an appropriation of \$450,000.00 pursuant to Act 26, 2018 Haw. Sess. Laws, to purchase civil legal services for indigent residents of the State of Hawai'i. As a result of this appropriation, the Judiciary awarded civil legal services contracts to the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i (LASH) and Volunteer Legal Services Hawai'i (VLSH).

In the first three months of its contract, LASH reported that it closed 1,113 cases, which affected the lives of 2,229 low-income persons in priority areas, such as support for families, keeping children safe and secure, preserving the home, foreclosure prevention, maintaining economic stability, and protecting consumers. Services included providing legal advice, preparing legal documents, and providing representation in court and administrative actions.

Since the commencement of its contract, VLSH reported that it completed over 495 intakes for residents seeking legal assistance in areas such as family law, collections and bankruptcy, probate matters, and landlord-tenant disputes. VLSH also conducted 44 pro se divorce workshops and 33 re-employment and community service project workshops. Additionally, VLSH held a pop-up legal clinic in Wai'anāe that served 25 individuals.

For these reasons, the Judiciary strongly supports this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.