



The Judiciary, State of Hawai‘i

Testimony to the House Committee on Judiciary
Representative Chris Lee, Chair
Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

Thursday, March 14, 2019, 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325

by
Rodney A. Maile
Administrative Director of the Courts

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Bill No. and Title: Senate Bill No. 130, S.D. 1, Relating to Civil Legal Services.

Purpose: Senate Bill No. 130, S.D.1 appropriates funds for the judiciary to purchase civil legal services for low- and moderate-income persons. Effective 7/1/2050.

Judiciary's Position:

The Judiciary strongly supports Senate Bill No. 130, S.D. 1, to appropriate funds for civil legal services providers to deliver civil legal services to low- and moderate-income persons. 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.



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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 Waianae that served 25 individuals.

The Judiciary supports the increased funding for civil legal services in the amount of \$800,000.00 for fiscal years 2020 and 2021. We note, however, that this amount is still well below the funding amount of \$2.1 million that was recommended by the working group assembled pursuant to House Resolution No. 12, H.D.1 and Senate Resolution No. 6, S.D. 1 (2015) in the "Plan for the Administration of Funding for Civil Legal Services," which was submitted to the legislature on December 30, 2015.

The Judiciary respectfully requests that the effective date be amended to July 1, 2019 to enable legal service providers to offer civil legal services low- and moderate-income persons.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 130, S.D.1.