



PHOCUSED

PROTECTING HAWAII'S OHANA, CHILDREN, UNDER SERVED, ELDERLY AND DISABLED

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Alex Santiago

DATE: February 10, 2010

TO: Representative Oshiro

FROM: Alex Santiago, Executive Director
PHOCUSED (Protecting Hawai'i's Ohana, Children, UnderServed,
Elderly and Disabled)

RE: HB 2963 Making an Emergency Appropriation from the Emergency and
Budget Reserve Fund for Education

Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair of the Finance Committee, I am Alex Santiago, Executive Director of PHOCUSED, a coalition of health, housing, human service agencies and individual advocates voicing the needs of the marginalized and underserved in Hawai'i. While PHOCUSED supports the intent of HB 2963 to end furlough Fridays, we also believe the original intent of establishing the fund was to meet basic educational needs of our children *and ensure core support for the poor and needy*. In addition, PHOCUSED believes that a discussion is needed on how best to allocate other reserve funds, and respectfully offers to be part of that discussion. There is no question leadership needs to find resources to preserve essential safety net and core services, as well as the restoration of school days.

As advocates for the Health, Housing, and Human Services sector we are also concerned about balancing the budget at an enormous social cost to our public school children, as well as our disabled citizens, the frail elderly, families who are a heartbeat away from homelessness, victims of domestic abuse, infants and toddlers who need special attention at the start of their lives, and others among us who are particularly vulnerable at a time of fiscal restraint. Recent surveys have indicated that the needs of our most vulnerable residents have risen alarmingly, while services to address their needs continue to be cut by the State.

PHOCUSED remains united to protect those with the greatest need and urges that services not be pitted against one another in your efforts to balance an out-of-sync system. We know the hard question is: where are funds to do what is pono going to come from? We don't have the answers, and we do support looking at all revenue options, with a careful analysis of consequences both intentional and unintentional, as you consider the opportunities.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns with you, and offer to be a resource to you in future deliberations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.