



PHOCUSED

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

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TO: Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair
And members of the Senate Education, and Commerce and Consumer Protection Committees

FROM: Joanne Lundstrom, Chair
PHOCUSED (Protecting Hawai'i's Ohana, Children, UnderServed, Elderly and Disabled)

RE: SB 2124 Relating to the Hawaii Hurricane Relief Fund

Senator Sakamoto, Senator Baker and members of the Senate Education, and Commerce and Consumer Protection Committees. I am Joanne Lundstrom, chair of PHOCUSED, a coalition of health, housing, human service agencies and individual advocates voicing the needs of the marginalized and underserved in Hawai'i. **PHOCUSED supports the intent of SB 2124 to end furlough Fridays.** Clearly a solution to end this short sighted decision to balance our budget must be found.

PHOCUSED believes the use of the Hurricane Relief Fund is a more appropriate use of state reserve funds rather than using a combination of the Hurricane Relief Funds and the Rainy Day fund. In addition, PHOCUSED believes that 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 urge 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.