

COUNCIL OF THE COUNTY OF MAUI
HUMAN SERVICES AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

November 16, 2001

Committee

Report No. 01-226

Honorable Chair and Members
of the County Council
County of Maui
Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii

Chair and Members:

Your Human Services and Economic Development Committee, having met on November 1, 2001, makes reference to County Communication No. 01-275, from Council Vice-Chair Kane, transmitting the following draft legislation relating to impacts of welfare reform in Maui County:

1. A draft bill entitled "A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO THE COUNTY'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF WELFARE REFORM IN MAUI COUNTY". The purpose of the draft bill is to require the Department of Housing and Human Concerns to address the impacts of welfare reform in Maui County by, among other things, compiling and distributing information about welfare-to-work services and receiving related recommendations from the Commission on Children and Youth.
2. A draft resolution entitled "URGING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES TO ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF WELFARE REFORM IN MAUI COUNTY". The purpose of the draft resolution is to urge public and private entities to coordinate and publicize transportation, child-care, and other services that may assist families with the move from welfare to work.

By memorandum dated October 4, 2001, your Committee Chair transmitted written testimony received at the October 4, 2001, Council meeting from Stephen Kealoha, Operations Manager for Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc. (MEO). Mr. Kealoha's testimony included information on MEO's Maui-to-Work program.

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By memorandum dated October 9, 2001, to the Department of the Corporation Counsel, your Committee Chair transmitted the draft bill entitled "A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO THE COUNTY'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF WELFARE REFORM IN MAUI COUNTY" for review and approval as to form and legality.

By memorandum dated October 15, 2001, the Department of the Corporation Counsel transmitted a proposed bill entitled "A BILL FOR AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE 8, MAUI COUNTY CODE, RELATING TO THE COUNTY'S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF WELFARE REFORM IN MAUI COUNTY" which included nonsubstantive revisions.

By memorandum dated October 23, 2001, the Council Vice-Chair transmitted a *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* article dated October 14, 2001, entitled, "End of the Line", by Lee Catterall. Your Committee notes that the article discusses the various impacts on the State when 818 Hawaii families lose their welfare benefits starting on December 1, 2001.

By letters dated October 25, 2001, your Committee Chair informed the Director of the Department of Human Services; the Director of the Department of Transportation; the Director of the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations; and the Director of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, of the Committee's upcoming meeting. The Directors were also invited to attend or provide relevant information in writing.

By memorandum dated October 30, 2001, the Council Vice-Chair, transmitted a letter dated August 6, 2001, from the Director of Housing and Human Concerns, regarding the Welfare Reform Act impacts to Maui County. Your Committee notes that the letter outlines the Department's efforts to address the impacts of the cessation of welfare benefits to a number of Maui County's families beginning December 1, 2001.

By memorandum dated October 31, 2001, the Council Vice-Chair transmitted a copy of his PowerPoint presentation entitled "Preparing Maui County's Residents and Government for the Impact of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996" ("Welfare Reform").

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At its meeting, your Committee met with the Director of Housing and Human Concerns and a Corporation Counsel.

The Council Vice-Chair presented an overview of the objectives of the proposed legislation. The main goal is to minimize the negative social and economic impacts of welfare reform by educating the public and coordinating communication among Federal, State, County and private agencies regarding available resources for former welfare recipients in the areas of affordable transportation, affordable child care and related services.

Ms. Kris Foster, Financial Assistance Program Administrator of the Department of Human Services' Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division, provided your Committee with both oral and written testimony.

Ms. Foster noted that the Department is attempting many different initiatives, as outlined in her packet, to assist those impacted by the Welfare Reform Act.

Your Committee received testimony from three additional individuals who either spoke in favor of the proposed legislation or provided input as to the kinds of programs that will need the most attention come December 1, 2001.

The Director of Housing and Human Concerns noted that her department began working on a variety of initiatives two years ago. She also noted that although she supported the intent of the proposed bill and draft resolution, she did not feel that any legislation was necessary. She further stated that many of the directives included in the bill, such as the creation of a website to publicize available resources, are already being done or are in the process of being completed.

The Director of Housing and Human Concerns also stated that the key area that should be focused on is housing. Welfare reform, coupled with the events of September 11, 2001, will compound the housing crisis in the County, she said.

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The Council Vice-Chair asked for your Committee's support of the proposed legislation by emphasizing the importance of providing the public with immediate access to information about welfare reform and options that are available to those that will be cut off from benefits. He also noted that although both public and private agencies may state that they are working to address the problems associated with welfare reform, he is not satisfied that those efforts are indeed coordinated in a manner that will reach the affected population efficiently.

After a brief discussion, your Committee deferred action on the proposed bill pending further discussion.

Your Committee considered the draft resolution and recommended that it be revised prior to the Council meeting of November 16, 2001, to include provisions that state (1) the Mayor must work with the County Council to address the welfare reform impacts; and (2) the public and private agencies must maximize their publicity and coordination efforts in order to reach the families affected by welfare reform.

Your Committee voted to recommend that the revised draft resolution be adopted. Your Committee also noted that if the Council feels that the public and private agencies failed to respond appropriately to the welfare reform crisis, it would revisit the proposed bill at a future date.

Your Human Services and Economic Development Committee **RECOMMENDS** that Resolution No. _____, as revised herein and attached hereto, entitled "URGING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES TO ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF WELFARE REFORM IN MAUI COUNTY", be **ADOPTED**.

Adoption of this report is respectfully requested.

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