

NĀ LOIO

Immigrant Rights and Public Interest Legal Center

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2433

Hearing: Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs
Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
February 9, 2006, 2:45 p.m.
Room 225

To: The Honorable David Ige, Chair Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs
The Honorable Colleen Hanabusa, Chair Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

From: Patricia McManaman, CEO

Na Loio – Immigrant Rights and Public Interest Legal Center is a non-profit organization committed to providing immigration legal services and advocacy in the public interest with a particular emphasis on serving poor and low-income immigrants and their families. As a member of the non-profit community and a beneficiary of the services provided by the Victim Witness Assistance program for the Honolulu Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Na Loio fully supports S.B. 2433.

Recent changes in immigration law allow immigrant domestic violence survivors, human trafficking victims, and other crime victims to acquire legal permanent resident status in the United States. As a result of these changes in the law, Na Loio frequently works with the Victim Witness Assistance program to further the needs of our clients. Additionally, when Na Loio's limited English proficient victim clients require an interpreter, the same is provided free of charge by the Victim Witness Assistance program through a federal grant from the Victims of Crime Act. Indeed, the Victim Witness Assistance program provides interpreters to a wide array of service providers including; domestic violence shelters, the police, and sex assault workers. Without the system developed by the Victim Witness Assistance program to secure interpreters, agencies like Na Loio would expend significant time and funding to retain competent interpreters for our crime victim clients.

Over and above these services, however, the Victim Witness Assistance program is a recognized statewide leader in the crime victim's right movement. Dennis Dunn and his staff play key leadership roles in a broad variety of state initiatives to support the needs of crime victims. In the past year, I have worked with the Dennis Dunn and the Victim Witness Assistance program on two state-initiatives: the recently completed Hawaii Statewide Strategic Plan for Victim Services and the Grants to Enforce Arrest Policies community forums and safety planning for stalking victims. The leadership provided by the Victim Witness Assistance program was critical to the success of these two statewide initiatives.

We simply cannot afford to under fund the critical services and leadership provided by the Victim Witness Assistance program. Na Loio supports without reservation S.B.2433.