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TO: Chair Todd Apo
Vice Chair Gary Okino
Members of the Budget Committee

FR: Nanci Kreidman, M.A.
Executive Director

RE: Budget Bill 18 – Executive Operating Budget and Program

Aloha. It is with continued urgency that I attend the City Council Budget Hearings.

The work we are doing in this community is life-saving and essential. We aren't able to help everyone, obviously, but those whose lives we are able to touch are never the same. They know what it is like to be understood, and they know what it feels like to have access to justice.

The system we have in place is complex, and is difficult to understand. Where do I go? What do I do next? What if this doesn't work? Why didn't they help me? What could I do instead? What should I expect when I go to court? Where do I get a temporary restraining order? How can I speak up and tell my story in front of him in the courtroom? How can I tell my parents what my boyfriend is doing?

We provide information, legal representation, referrals, legal information, advocacy in civil and criminal court, telephone assistance throughout the day, crisis counseling and safety planning. Without compassionate assistance and access to safety, circumstances victims face daily are life-threatening and as we know can end in death. Our programs are designed to help special populations, including youth, immigrants and Filipina victims as well as all other adults who are victims of intimate partner abuse.

The year began with two very stark reminders that domestic violence is lethal, and we must do everything we can to help victims who come forward and ask for help. Taking that step, taking every step is terrifying and leads victims to wonder whether the threats made by the abuser will be real.

In FY 07 we had 4 FTE positions and 1 part time position supported with City dollars; in FY 08 we have 2 FTE. The funding included in the amended budget bill will enable us to restore staff positions to assist us in doing the critical work we do-which is not done by any other domestic violence agency in Hawaii. During the first two quarters of this year our staff made 201 court appearances, answered 859 calls on our helpline, completed 1,696 safety plans, and had telephone contact 4,463 times with clients on our caseload.

With funding from the city we can continue to serve well, serve wisely and serve many more than we serve today.

Thank you for your consideration of the funding contained in Bill 18.

MISC. COM. 1047