

Representative Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Representative Karl Rhodes, Vice Chair

LATE TESTIMONY

Committees: Rep. Karen Awana
Rep. Della Au Belatti
Rep. Joe Bertram
Rep. Rida Cabanilla
Rep. Josh Green
Rep. John Mizuno
Rep. James Tokioka
Rep. Gene Ward

Anna Ventura
Single Parent and a Grandmother of 3

February 14, 2008
8:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon

House Bill 2813

Aloha Chair and members of the committee:

My name is Anna Ventura, I'm here testifying in Full Support of House Bill: 2813 relating to Hawaii Public Housing Authority; Housing Incentives; study. I strongly feel that Hawaii Public Housing start transitioning families into permanent housing because there are families who have been residing in public housing for many, many years. They have no deadline of transitioning out to permanent homes. There are many families who have applied for housing, and only find themselves just sitting on a wait list for many years.

We need to have Hawaii Public Housing Authority to start transition families into permanent homes and move the families off the wait list. So they may get a chance of seek guidance with rental assistance, developing an account program, and get the assistance of first-time homeownership. Our community has many needs and challenges. The bill identifies the concerns and solutions in addressing the barriers to assuring we have a healthier community and thereby reducing the need for continued government interventions.

Thank you for allowing me this time to submit my testimony and request your favor to support this measure. For more information I can be contacted at #668-2224.

Mahalo



Anna Ventura

Rep. Maile Shimabukuro, Chair
Rep. Karl Rhoads, Vice-Chair
Committee on Human Services and Housing (HSH)

LATE TESTIMONY

Kanani Kaaiawahia Bulawan
Ret. Executive Director of Waianae Community Outreach, Private Citizen,
Homeowner and Previous Tenant of Public Housing

February 14, 2008, 9:25am Rm: 329

FULL SUPPORT OF HB2813: Relating to Public Housing Incentives

Aloha Chair and members of the committee:

My name is Kanani Kaaiawahia Bulawan. Before I start I'd like to point out that among other positions I represent, I am a staff member of Rep. Karen Awana; however, my testimony here this morning is based on my own opinions and experience. With that said, I will now state my reason for testifying in Full Support of HB: 2813 relating to Public Housing Creating Incentives for tenants to Transition to permanent housing.

First as a tenant of public housing and a private citizen, you can become very comfortable with living in "affordability" and not be accountable for the changes in your family's circumstances because it would be the "Housing's" responsibility to adjust to your circumstance. In our case, I'm glad that the management at the time was very supportive by assuring us the income we had was enough to afford rent and to prepare for other housing options. Today I'm proud to say that my family was given the opportunity to find permanent housing while we were living in public housing. As a private citizen I can see why people who live in public housing sense they "have it made" and have no reason to move out of public housing. Consider the process as it is today. A family lives in housing pays a minimum of 30% of their annual income towards rent. If this income changes, the rent changes to the minimum of \$0.00 and depending on what housing site you are living in you may also be credited an energy allowance. Moreover if you lose your income there is no requirement for you to replace it in a timely manner. In addition to this the family size changes, the housing will relocate you to another unit that will best fit your family size. I ask why you would want to move. The housing department reports

rent collections are falling because among other reasons, families aren't receiving income and therefore must be 100% supplemented.

Second as the director of a non-profit organization that primarily focused on human services and housing issues, it is very frustrating to know that there are clear distinct groups of people that are in need of public housing and cannot attain it because of a group of other people who believe that public housing is their permanent home and see no way to leave that setting. As I recall the intention and purpose of public housing was to allow a family to have safe and affordable housing while being able to seek permanent housing via homeownership or other "specialized" housing. If this is the intent then the current management and operations of housing is failing. I understand this measure will cause more work. I also understand there is a huge and unmanaged waitlist and more important I understand the need for housing units to address the people in homeless shelters. Consider this process if we make some changes today. A family is unsheltered and moves into a homeless program. Gets the initial services for preparation to transition. Moves into transitional housing for a maximum of 2 years then be able to transition into affordable housing for another period of time to assure that permanent housing is achieved. The period of affordable housing is where public housing plays a role. The period of stay may last up to 5 years assuring that a plan is in place that would be monitored through the management review as like a service plan that is monitored by the management agency. These are only a few of the suggestions to create incentives. I'm sure there are lots more that can be considered and I would encourage that HPHA start the process for planning the implementation of these types of incentives. And, there will always be a special group of people who will need to be in public housing for a permanent period, i.e. elderly and disabled in which "special supportive" housing is necessary.

Our community has many needs and challenges. The bill identifies the concerns and solutions in addressing the barriers to assuring we have a healthier community and thereby reducing the need for continued government interventions. More strongly the bill demands that public housing revisit their purpose and implement the changes that will

motivate current tenants to transition into permanent housing so that others waiting can have the same opportunities.

Thank you for allowing me this time to submit my testimony and request your favor to support this measure. For more information I can be contacted at 783-9302. I would also be available for any questions or to join the Housing to discuss other options for incentives

Mahalo,