

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, and Private Citizen

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

FULL SUPPORT OF HB2815: Relating to Public Housing Inventory

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: 2815 relating to Public Housing Inventory of Vacant Units

It has been along standing concern in the community that our public housing sites are not fully occupied because of vacant units left by a number of reasons. One of these reasons involves the "damage" of a unit that now deems it unlivable. With this in mind, I support that HPHA provide a report to the legislature on their attempts in addressing the vacancies showing the number of units, the cost of repair to those units, the anticipated timeline in addressing the repairs and how they can involve the community to assist with having the units ready for placement. For years the community at large have asked to assist with making our Public Housing sites more inclusive to the community rather than isolated. When we can involve our greater community to work together in building a healthier neighborhood we build a complete sense of pride. Currently the surrounding neighbors of a public housing site are concerned about negative activities that may be going on because there is no pride in living amongst a neighborhood that has boards on the windows and apartments that appear to be abandoned. We need to start moving towards renovating these vacant units for varies reasons, some of them I have just mentioned, others include moving people out of transitional housing programs into these unit, moving homeless people into emergency shelters and then into transition.

Currently public housing reports that it will take them approximately 2.5 years to clear the vacancy backlog, this is unacceptable because to consider that a family only has 2 years in transitional housing will only keep these families in the cycle of homelessness. Let the people help the government meet the needs of the people!

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 provide an annual report to assure every attempt to addressing the vacancies of our public housing is being considered and we have a consistent turn-around of families moving into housing.

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,