



LATE TESTIMONY

SB 2428 RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing
Finance

January 29, 2008
Room 016

1:30 pm

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs supports SB 2428. Our interest in this legislation is primarily based on our concern that 40% of the overall population of individuals who experience homelessness in Hawaii are Native Hawaiian. The 2003 homeless census revealed that there were 6,029 homeless individuals at any point-in-time in Hawaii and approximately 14,500 in a given year.

OHA generally agrees that there is need for near-term solutions to Hawaii's affordable housing and homeless problem, which will only escalate beyond reasonable management without immediate intervention and funding by the State. The State is the largest stakeholder and is charged with the greatest responsibility or "kuleana" to make available safe and affordable housing for all of its residents. The appropriations being recommended are necessary and a movement in a proactive direction toward resolving these critical issues.

With shelters like those built on the Leeward Coast last year already full and with waitlists, the need to make more State resources available to develop more alternative shelters is essential.

OHA urges your support for this bill. Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to present testimony.

HAWAII COUNCIL OF MAYORS

LATE

January 29, 2008

Testimony of the
Hawaii Council of Mayors
Bryan Baptiste, Mayor of Kauai
Mufi Hannemann, Mayor of Honolulu
Harry Kim, Mayor of Hawaii
Charmaine Tavares, Mayor of Maui

before the
Senate Committee on Human Services and Public Housing

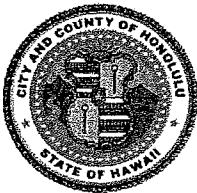
~~S.B. 2487: West Hawaii Housing~~
~~S.B. 2428: Relating to Homelessness~~

The Hawaii Council of Mayors has designated homelessness as one of our top priorities for legislative support. Every county is experiencing homelessness. The scope or nature of the problem varies by county, but this much is clear: Many of the homeless are chronically homeless who require social services of a degree beyond the county governments' resources. We need more shelters and public housing so the homeless have somewhere to live, rather than on our streets and beaches.

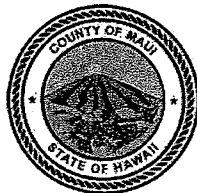
We know the extent of the problem through our police, emergency services, housing, social service, and parks agencies. In December, we met with representatives of state agencies involved in addressing the needs of the homeless, to hear about their work and recommendations for legislative action. We believe you will have those before you, along with measures proposed by you and your colleagues.

We do not pretend to have the answers. However, we are united in our appeal to the members of this body to support measures that will enable the state to repair and increase the inventory of public housing units and stimulate the development of housing. We need to provide more health care, mental and substance abuse treatment, and community living and job skill training—and the mayors endorse authorizing funding to the appropriate state agencies to provide these services.

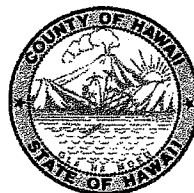
Mahalo.



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