



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TESTIMONY- OPPOSE – HCR 281/HR 253: URGING THE HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE FAIR AND EQUAL ACCESS TO PUBLIC HOUSING BY REMOVING PREFERENCES IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

TO: **Representative Rida Cabanilla, Chair**, Representative Pono Chong, Vice Chair, and Members, House Committee on Housing

FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Housing Programs Director, Catholic Charities Hawaii

HEARING: Wednesday, April 1, 2009, 9:00 am; CR 325

Chair Cabanilla, Vice Chair Chong, and members of the Committee on Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these resolutions. I am Betty Lou Larson, the Housing Programs Director at Catholic Charities Hawaii. We are also members of Partners in Care. Catholic Charities Hawaii opposes the removal of preferences for the selection of tenants in public housing

Currently the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA)'s rules provide for a preference for homeless individuals and families who are working with a homeless shelter or transitional housing program, and following their service plan to get their lives back on track. How can the State work to end homelessness if there are no housing resources for homeless families that they can afford? Without this preference, homeless families would have very few options for affordable housing and many, if not most, would remain homeless. The families cannot afford the market rents for a 2 bedroom unit, even though many are working.

This resolution suggests that HPHA admit tenants who are the working poor. These ARE the families that we are serving in our shelters at Catholic Charities Hawaii! Most of the homeless families at our Ma'ili Land Transitional Housing Program are working poor. Our experience at Ma'ili Land is that without affordable housing, especially public housing, the outlook would be very grim for families to transition out within two years. With rents having doubled or tripled even in the Waianae area, there are few affordable rentals out in the market. **Until adequate affordable housing projects are brought on-line, public housing remains one of the few resources that the State has to reduce homelessness.**

How will the State address homelessness? How will the State ensure that little children do not grow up in cars and on beaches? The unintended consequences of these resolutions will be more homeless living in our parks and neighborhoods. Without public housing, many homeless participants would not be able to move out of transitional shelters within the 2 year time limit, and would again become homeless. HPHA's preference for homeless is critical to maintain, until more affordable rental units are actually built. We urge you to focus on the creation of affordable rental housing vs. eliminating the preferences for public housing.



**A JOINT LEGISLATIVE EFFORT**

E-Mail: [HSGTestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:HSGTestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov)  
Regarding: House Committee on Housing  
Hearing on: April 1, 2009 @ 8:00 a.m.

**Date:** March 30, 2009  
**To:** House Committee on Housing  
Rep. Rida Cabanilla, Chair & Rep. Pono Chong, Vice Chair  
**From:** Dennis Arakaki  
Executive Director  
Hawaii Family Forum / Hawaii Catholic Conference

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**Re:** OPPOSITION TO HCR 281 / HR 253 URGING THE HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE FAIR AND EQUAL ACCESS TO PUBLIC HOUSING BY REMOVING PREFERENCES IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS.

Honorable Chair and members of the House Committee on Human Services, I am Dennis Arakaki, representing both the Hawaii Family Forum and the Hawaii Catholic Conference which is the public policy voice for the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii. Hawaii Family Forum is a non-profit, pro-family education organization committed to preserving and strengthening families in Hawaii. The Roman Catholic Church in Hawaii, under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents over 220,000 Catholics in Hawaii.

Along with our community partner, Catholic Charities Hawai'i, we oppose the removal of preferences for the selection of tenants in public housing

This resolution suggests that HPHA admit tenants who are the working poor – the very families that reside at Catholic Charities Ma'ili Land Transitional Housing Program. Rents are seriously increasing in the Waianae area and only a few affordable rentals available. **Currently, public housing remains one of the few resources that the State has to reduce homelessness.**

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA)'s rules currently provide for a preference for homeless individuals and families who are working with a homeless shelter or transitional housing program, and following their service plan to get their lives back on track. Our deep concern is that without this preference, homeless families would have very few options for affordable housing and many, if not most, would remain homeless. Even though many of them are working, these families cannot afford the staggering market rents for a 2 bedroom unit.

Without public housing, many homeless participants would not be able to move out of transitional shelters within the 2 year time limit, and would again become homeless. We urge you to focus on the creation of affordable rental housing vs. eliminating the preferences for public housing. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

To: Representative Rida Cabanilla, Chair,  
Representative Pono Chong, Vice Chair  
Committee on Housing

From: Community Alliance Partners  
Hawai'i Island Continuum of Care to End Homelessness  
(808) 933-6033 [hawaiicap@gmail.com](mailto:hawaiicap@gmail.com)

HSG Public Hearing Date: Wednesday, April 1, 9:00 am; CR 325

**OPPOSE: HCR281 & HR253  
REMOVAL OF PREFERENCES FOR PUBLIC HOUSING**

Dear Chair Cabanilla, Vice Chair Chong, and members of the Committee on Housing:

Community Alliance Partners (CAP), the Continuum of Care for the Island of Hawai'i, is a broad based consortium of social service providers and community members working together to address the issue of homelessness. These efforts are centered on collaboration to develop a spectrum of resources to assist those affected by homelessness in obtaining and maintaining sustainable housing and achieving economic self-sufficiency.

**CAP is writing to OPPOSE the section of HCR281 & HR253 which would prohibit HPHA from establishing preferences for the selection of tenants in public housing.**

The removal of the homeless preference for public housing will result in extended periods of time for individuals and families to remain unsheltered, increasing their exposure to the highest risk factors. If individuals in homeless programs are no longer placed as a high priority for public housing it will limit access to emergency and transitional shelter services, as participants will increasingly stay for the full extent of the program duration, as they struggle to compete for extremely limited inventory of affordable housing in the community.

Current guidelines allow for a preference status for persons who are homeless and are working with service providers to resolve obstacles to their stability. This preference provides a key avenue to assist individuals and families in the most severe situations to access affordable housing which can provide the foundation of support to help them continue their progress. Public Housing is an essential resource in the Continuum of Care, and the homeless preference is an important in facilitating the forward momentum of those working to improve their lives.

**We urge the committee to delete the prohibition on preferences** for public housing to retain this tool as a key step in reducing homelessness. We encourage continuing collaboration with service providers to developing support services to help families continue the transition on into the mainstream housing market and greater independence.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

LINDA LINGLE  
GOVERNOR



CHAD K. TANIGUCHI  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII**

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY  
1002 NORTH SCHOOL STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 17907  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Statement of  
**Chad K. Taniguchi**  
Hawaii Public Housing Authority  
Before the

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING**

April 1, 2009 9:00 A.M.  
Room 325, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of  
**HCR 281 and HR253**

**URGING THE HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE FAIR AND EQUAL  
ACCESS TO PUBLIC HOUSING BY REMOVING PREFERENCES IN THE APPLICATION  
PROCESS**

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) respectfully opposes HCR 281 and HR 253. HPHA feels it is important to maintain the flexibility to address changing needs by having the ability to use waiting list preferences. The seriousness of the homelessness situation demands that all available tools be available in addressing the needs. To eliminate all preferences under any circumstance would not allow us to use an important toll to address the needs of Hawaii.