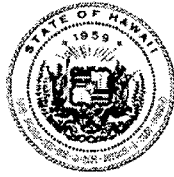


SB 2473

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR



BARBARA E. ARASHIRO
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Statement of
Barbara E. Arashiro
Hawaii Public Housing Authority
Before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND HOUSING**

February 18, 2010 2:45 P.M.
Room 016, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of
S.B. 2473
RELATING TO HOUSING

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) supports the intent of S.B. 2473 to allow children in a crisis situation to be put into the care of a grandparent when other alternatives do not exist. We believe, though, that family housing is the more appropriate place for this to occur, and that amending the language of this bill is necessary to provide a better environment for children and avoid endangering the status of state elderly housing. We therefore recommend that this bill provide for temporarily allowing the subject children as visitors in elderly housing, with a provision requiring that the family be placed in a more appropriate family housing unit as soon as one is available.

The bill does not specify a limited time period for children in elderly housing

The situations that would trigger use of the provisions of the bill are not necessarily temporary in nature. They may result in children living in an elderly high rise from infancy until adulthood. HPHA recognizes the need to place children on short notice, and can accommodate that. However, it is important to the children and to the elderly neighbors that a more appropriate solution be found as soon as possible after placement.

Elderly housing buildings are not the appropriate place to house children

State elderly housing is in high-rise buildings with facilities and services directed solely at the needs of the elderly. Most units are studio apartments, along with some small one-bedroom units. There is little room for additional residents in the units and we can anticipate that often there will be more than one child needing placement with the grandparent(s), in which case there will simply not be enough room. There are no convenient play areas for children; the buildings are set up and operated for senior citizens. State family housing, on the other hand, has a variety of unit sizes and facilities more appropriate for children.

Residents of elderly housing buildings have told HPHA that for a variety of reasons they prefer to live with other elderly people. In response, the HPHA Board of Directors has authorized staff to begin the process of requesting federal approval to designate 3 federal high rises as elderly-only, and stop accepting new non-elderly residents. We think that residents of state elderly

housing share that preference for elderly-only housing, and we do not want to lose the state elderly housing that we have.

State elderly housing status may be endangered

As stated above, the situations contemplated in this bill are not necessarily temporary in nature. As time goes on we can expect a growing number of grandchildren to be residing in the state elderly high-rises for years at a time. Given the large demand for public and affordable housing compared to the supply, we anticipate that there would be legal action at some point to establish that the elderly housing is, in fact, no longer elderly housing, and that HPHA must accept as tenants anyone who applies. Placing children in the senior citizen buildings without time limit may, therefore, endanger the status of elderly housing.

A more appropriate alternative exists

HPHA suggests that instead of placing children in elderly high-rise buildings, a preferable alternative would be to move the family to state family housing. Children in a crisis situation could be allowed to move in temporarily as visitors with the grandparent(s), and the family would be moved to an appropriate state family housing unit as soon as one is available. We suggest the following amendment to this bill:

(1) Except as provided in this section, the authority shall accept elder or elderly households as residents in the housing projects; the authority shall also allow the minor grandchildren of a resident of an elderly housing project to live with the resident on a temporary basis, if due to a family crisis, as determined by the authority, the minor grandchildren would otherwise be without appropriate care. A family crisis shall include the following situations:

- (A) Imprisonment or arrest of the parent of the minor;
- (B) Criminal forfeiture of the dwelling of the parent of the minor pursuant to chapter 712A that results in the homelessness of the minor;
- (C) Admission under chapter 334 to a psychiatric facility or civil commitment of the parent of the minor for mental health, mental illness, drug addiction, or alcoholism;
- (D) The minor is abused or neglected, as defined in section 346-1, and the minor has been removed under authority of law from the care of the parent; or
- (E) Abandonment of the minor by the parent for any length of time and the absence of other relatives able or willing to care for the minor;

provided that the grandparent and grandchildren shall be transferred to a state family housing unit of appropriate size as soon as one becomes available; and provided further, that if a grandparent resident has been transferred to family housing by the authority solely because the resident allowed a minor grandchild who is in a family crisis, as described in this subsection, to reside in the resident's unit, that same grandparent shall be given first priority to be accepted in the housing projects upon abatement of the family crisis;



Email to: HMSTestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov

Hearing on: February 18, 2010 @ 2:45 p.m.

Conference Room 016

DATE: February 16, 2010

TO: Senate Committee on Human Services | Senate Committee on Education & Housing
Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair | Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair | Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

FROM: Dennis Arakaki, Executive Director

RE: SB 2473, Relating to Housing

Honorable Chair Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Ihara and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, I am Dennis Arakaki, **representing both the Hawaii Family Forum and 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, representing a network of over 250 Christian churches. The Hawaii Catholic Conference is the public policy arm of the Roman Catholic Church in Hawaii, which under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents over 220,000 Catholics in Hawaii.

We are in strong support for this measure that provides a safety net for children when their parent or parents are not able to provide a safe home and a nurturing environment. In cases where a child is exposed to high risk situations of domestic abuse, child abuse, mental illness, drug abuse, financial instability and chronic homeless, grandparents not only provide a option for safe shelter but also a nurturing and loving relationship. Even if it is only to provide respite for the parent who is troubled, it may be a worthwhile investment to have the child stay with a grandparent.

As a parent of single mother struggling to raise a child, it is important that the child knows that there is family that can be there for them. It may not always be the case where the grandparent will welcome the grandchild into a peaceful home and quiet existence, but I am sure that many would prefer taking in the child than having to give them up to foster care or continue to live in a harmful environment. During these difficult economic times, temporary measures like these are valuable in providing options to families. I urge you to pass this measure.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and share my mana'o regarding this very important measure.



SB 2473
RELATING TO HOUSING

Senate Committees on Human Services, and Education and Housing

February 18, 2010

2:15 p.m.

Room: 016

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SB 2473**, which would allow grandparents residing in elderly housing projects to temporarily raise their mo'opuna in their units based on certain family crisis situations, and to afford the opportunity to allow elderly residents who have been evicted from their units for raising their mo'opuna to return back to their units and be placed on priority status.

Native Hawaiians believe that one of the most treasured relationships is between a kupuna and their mo'opuna. The importance of this relationship is illustrated through the Hawaiian proverb "Pipili no ka pilali i ke kumu kukui," which translates to "the Pilali gum sticks to the kukui tree." This 'ōlelo no'eau is used to describe one who remains close to a loved one all the time, as a child may cling to the grandparent he loves ('Ōlelo No'eau 2662).

Unfortunately, this treasured relationship is being strained by certain elderly housing project restrictions. We have received reports of situations in which kūpuna were discouraged from allowing their mo'opuna to live with them, particularly in times when the children were in need of family support. Kūpuna should not be penalized or forced out of their housing units for aiding a loved one. We believe that SB 2473 would help remedy this.

Therefore, OHA urges the Committee to PASS SB 2473. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

February 17, 2010

TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair; and Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair;
And members of the Senate Human Services and Education and Housing Committees.

FROM: Marcie Nakamae

RE: SB 2473 Relating to Housing

Chairs Chun Oakland and Sakamoto and members of the Senate Human Services and Education and Housing Committees, my name is Marcie Nakamae and I am a Master of Social Work student at the University of Hawaii. I am testifying in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 2473, Relating to Housing.

Why is this population important for us to support? Hawaii has one of, if not the, largest percentage of children living with their grandparents. The American Association of Retired Persons (2007) reported that approximately 13% of all the children in Hawaii live in grandparent-headed households.

Financially, we need this population. Grandparents raising grandchildren save the state money. If these children ended up in the foster care system, it would cost the state \$529 per child per month, which amounts to over \$17 million dollars per month. Perhaps more importantly, children raised in this kind of household fare better than their counterparts being raised by non-relatives. They have fewer emotional and learning disabilities, drug and alcohol problems, and truancy/delinquency problems.

It makes sense to support those who are caring for Hawaii's children. Evicting grandparents because they allowed their grandchildren to live with them due to unfortunate circumstances only makes matters worse. Homelessness is another growing problem for Hawaii and we will only further this issue if we continue to evict grandparents and grandchildren from their homes. We should not continue to punish those who, in times of crisis, rise up to the occasion and take in these children. Psychologically and emotionally, this type of transition for grandparents can be difficult. Imagine basking in retirement one day and the next you are a new parent all over again. Parenting during a time when one should not be can take a toll on our grandparents' well-being and evicting them from their homes may exacerbate the problem.

Supporting this bill will not only help keep homelessness and overcrowding in the foster system down, but it can also help to keep families together in times of crisis. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Marcie Nakamae
mknakamae@gmail.com

ChunOakland3 - Serena

From: Patricia Urieff [purieff@QLCC.org]
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2010 5:41 PM
To: Patju@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Support for System to Allow Eligible Residents of Senior Housing with Grandchildren-in-Crisis to Temporarily Reside in Unit Until Other Appropriate Housing is Located

HMSTestimony@Capitol.hawaii.gov

IN SUPPORT

Providing Testimony for the Record

To the Senate Committee on Human Services and the Committee on Education and Housing, Senators Suzanne Chun Oakland, Les Ihara, Jr., Norman Sakamoto, and Michelle Kidani for Hearing scheduled for Thursday, February 18, 2010, at 2:15 PM in Conference Room O16, at the State Capitol at 415 Beretania Street.

From Patricia Urieff, Certified Montessori Preschool Teacher, MSW, ACSW, Licensed Social Worker with thirty years of experience working with children and their families; parent; and grandparent.

REGARDING SB 2473 RELATING TO HOUSING

Allows grandchildren of elderly housing project residents to temporarily reside with the residents in certain family crisis situations. Affords residents evicted for raising grandchildren-in-crisis in their housing project units, priority status to return to project housing.

August 2008, the *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Task Force* identified barriers in "the system" and ever since has recommended that all housing managers receiving government money (1) stop sending Eviction Notices to eligible seniors living in public housing who through no fault of their own gets grandchildren-in-crisis who need care; and (2) instead, managers to start allowing reasonable time for those grandparents to find other appropriate housing.

When the system enforces those steps then that will prevent (1) the grandchild-in-crisis from entering/going to state foster care at a cost to taxpayers at \$529.00 per month, per child; (2) will prevent grandparents committed to caring for grandchildren from hurrying to leave senior housing and becoming homeless; (3) and prevent scenarios similar to that of the known committed grand-father who left his public housing unit and lives in his car with his grand-daughter.

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair

From: Chansley Mattos

Date: February 18, 2010

Subject: Support of SB 2473, Maintaining Housing for Grandparents Caring for their Grandchildren

My name is Chansley Mattos and I am a Master's of Social Work student at University of Hawaii at Manoa. I support SB 2473 because of the extremely important role that grandparents take in raising the children of Hawaii. Often times, due to forces outside of the control of the grandparents, they become the first avenue pursued when trying to place a child that has been displaced from their home.

Placing children with their grandparents is of great benefit to the child, their family, and the state of Hawaii. Placement with their grandparents saves the state millions of dollars that would have been used to place the child in foster care and allows children to maintain close ties with their family of origin. This bill helps encourage grandparents that may be potential caregivers to care for their grandchild without fear of being immediately evicted from their homes. Due to the high cost of living, some grandparents may have a difficult time obtaining a housing situation immediately. This bill gives grandparents the time that they need to obtain the appropriate resources in order to find a more permanent housing solution for themselves and their grandchildren.

Thank you for your consideration!

Chansley Mattos

Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work

University of Hawaii at Manoa

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair

From: Chloe Yogi

Date: February 18, 2010

Subject: Support of SB 2473, Maintaining Housing for Grandparents Caring for their Grandchildren

My name is Chloe Yogi and I am a student in the Master's of Social Work program at the University of Hawaii. I strongly support SB 2473 because it is more than often that grandparents end up caring for their grandchildren. It is important that the child be cared for by a family member and most of the time, grandparents are willing to take on that responsibility. Also, by having the child stay with their grandparents, the child will feel more at ease with familiar people. This will prevent the shock of entering foster care and having to be cared for by strangers.

It is unjust to deny housing for the elderly when they are trying their best to better their grandchildren and give them as much as they can give. Just imagine: being an elderly person, being homeless, and having all your grandchildren to care for. It sounds excruciating and the stress on the elderly in that kind of environment could probably push him/her into a state where there is no safety and protection for his/her grandchildren. It is also unhealthy for these children to go from one hostile environment to another. The chance for these children to live in a safe and protected home would be out of the question unless this bill is passed. Thank you for your time.

Chloe Yogi
University of Hawaii
Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work

ChunOakland3 - Serena

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2010 3:51 PM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: jillf2184@yahoo.com
Subject: Testimony for SB2473 on 2/18/2010 2:15:00 PM

Testimony for HMS/EDH 2/18/2010 2:15:00 PM SB2473

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Jill Friedman
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: jillf2184@yahoo.com
Submitted on: 2/17/2010

Comments: