

SCR204



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

**TESTIMONY- OPPOSE --- SCR 204: REQUESTING THE HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY TO AMEND ITS RULES TO ALLOW AN OCCUPANT FACING EVICTION FROM A STATE-FUNDED HOMELESS SHELTER TO REMAIN IN THE SHELTER PENDING AN APPEAL OF THE EVICTION**

TO: **Senator Norman Sakamoto, Chair**, Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Education and Housing

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

HEARING: **Friday, March 19, 2010**, 1:45 pm; CR 225

Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members, Committee on Education and Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this housing resolution. I am Betty Lou Larson, the Housing Programs Director at Catholic Charities Hawaii. We are also a member of Partners in Care, which also opposes this bill. Catholic Charities Hawaii opposes this bill which would allow any occupant in state-funded homeless shelters to remain in the shelter until all appeals are completed.

Catholic Charities Hawaii has serious concerns with this proposal. It appears that both emergency and transitional shelters would be covered by this proposal. These shelters are not housing projects. They are programs where housing is a benefit of actively participating in the program. This proposal would open up the eviction process to interpretation and more confusion. With the drastic reduction in the staffing of the Homeless Branch, a large increase in appeals may take some time to resolve. Possible long delays in evicting a participant may result, such as now occur in public housing. This will impact on the Programs and other residents who see that some residents can "beat the system".

Catholic Charities Hawaii does everything it can to prevent evictions. We give residents many chances to correct problem behaviors. Evictions are a last resort. We also must follow the rules set by the Homeless Branch which monitors the programs. We inform each client in writing of the grievance procedure and their right to appeal the eviction as well as the appeals process. This included review by an outside hearings officer. The administrator of the shelter does not have the sole discretion to decide whether an occupant may appeal an eviction. Furthermore, clients are informed that they have the right to appeal the program's decision to the HPHA/Homeless Branch.

If there are concerns about programs following the current rules, this would appear to be an issue of monitoring of programs that receive State funds. If further clarification is needed of these rules, review and monitoring by HPHA would be more effective. We suggest that the HPHA work with providers to ensure fair treatment of all residents of shelters. Thank you for hearing our concerns.





# Weinberg Village Waimanalo

A Program of

## Holomua Na 'Ohana

*"Families Moving Forward to a Better Life"*

Board of Directors

Mark M. Nomura  
Milton L. McAngus  
Walter P. Yin

Weinberg Village  
Waimanalo Staff

Holly Holowach  
Linoe McKeague  
Charnay Kalama  
Denise Ballaibe  
James Varner  
Charles Keaweehu  
Abraham Grace

**TESTIMONY- OPPOSE – SCR 204: RESOLUTION (Introducer: Hanabusa)**

TO: Housing Committee Senators

FROM: Holly Holowach, Director, Weinberg Village Waimanalo

**HEARING: Friday, 3/19/10, 1:45 PM; CR 225**

Dear Senators,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this Resolution. My name is Holly Holowach, Director of Weinberg Village Waimanalo, which is a transitional housing program for homeless families. My staff and I are also very active members of Partners in Care. **We strongly oppose this resolution which would amend the rules to allow an occupant facing eviction from a state-funded homeless shelter to remain in the shelter pending an appeal of the eviction.**

While the idea of allowing a person to remain housed while appealing an eviction sounds commendable, the actual impact that this would have on our shelter would be disastrous to the safety and stability of the overall program and the rest of the compliant tenants.

Our Program, like most transitional housing programs has strict rules regarding behavior while living in the shelter. We are a clean and sober facility and do random drug and alcohol testing as part of the program. Compliance is mandatory. **We are engaging the residents in making important changes that will support permanent housing for their children and families for years to come.**

When each family moves in, they read the Program Rules and sign each one acknowledging that they understand the rule and will attempt to abide by the rule. Each rule has a different point value. They can be evicted (or terminated from the Program) if they have 100 points. Using or selling drugs, alcohol, violence and stealing are each worth 100 points and a person can be terminated immediately from the program if they violate.

We are in the business of housing the homeless so **the last thing we want is to evict or terminate a family.** However there are times when that must be done for the good of the entire Village. Waiting for hearings and appeals before removing them from the property is not practical.

It is important to note that, in most cases, we do not evict a person immediately and then do it **only as a last resort** when a person has been repeatedly non-compliant or is a danger to self or others.

### *Holomua Na 'Ohana*

41-490 Saddle City Road ~ Waimanalo, HI 96795

Phone: 808-259-6658 ~ Fax: 808-259-5303





# Weinberg Village Waimanalo

A Program of

## Holomua Na 'Ohana

*"Families Moving Forward to a Better Life"*

When someone has a rule violation, we first work with them diligently to help them to correct their behavior. If it is a serious violation such as using drugs or drinking, we give them consequences such as sending them to drug treatment for an assessment and requiring that they attend NA or AA meetings. We create Eviction Prevention Plans which they help to create and sign to give them the chance to remain in housing. We put them on month-to-month probation status and follow up regularly to make sure they are on track and doing what needs to be done to remain in the program.

Many succeed at this and do stay, but once in a while, we must follow through with the consequence and end their participation in the program and thus their housing. By the time we do this, they know they have violated and been non-compliant and rarely argue or ask for a hearing.

When they move in, all residents are informed that they are allowed to request a hearing if they are evicted or terminated from the program. They are given our Grievance Policy information (the state Homeless Program has a copy too) which clearly states how to file a Grievance and how to appeal. When they are terminated from the program and asked to leave, the Grievance Policy is reiterated in the Eviction letter. BUT they must leave during the process for the safety of all. Allowing them to remain in the unit while appealing will undermine the effectiveness of consequences for their bad behavior. If people know they won't have to move until they exhaust every appeal, they won't be as motivated to behave well in order to remain housed. The possibility of eviction, while used only as last resort, is a great motivator for improving behavior and when coupled with caring case management, can be a highly effective tool to establish good tenant values and habits. We want our clients to leave here knowing how to do those things that will keep them permanent housed and how to create a safe environment for their keiki.

If someone is violent and requires immediate eviction, allowing that person to remain would be detrimental to all. There are many times when we must make hard decisions to evict. Having the possibility of eviction for rule violations actually helps the clients work hard to remain housed especially when they get settled and enjoy the program.

A resolution like this would tie our hands and hurt the residents who are doing well. A resolution like this would allow those who are masters at manipulating the system to continue to stay when they are misbehaving. This will create a negative environment among the residents who are abiding by the rules and want a safe place for their keiki to grow up. **This resolution is a bad idea. We strongly oppose this resolution.**

At this week's Partners In Care meeting, the members agreed and voted to oppose this resolution. We urge you to oppose this resolution and to support allowing the enforcement of Program participation or termination at a state-funded homeless shelter to remain within the hands of the Program Directors and their Boards.

Mahalo,  
Holly Holowach  
Director  
Weinberg Village Waimanalo

*Holomua Na 'Ohana*

*41-490 Saddle City Road ~ Waimanalo, HI 96795*

*Phone: 808-259-6658 ~ Fax: 808-259-5303*