

Kanani Kaaiawahia Bulawan

**TESTIMONY OFFERING SUGGESTION TO SB 897, SD1: RELATING TO
HOMELESSNESS**

TO: Senator Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair, Senator Malama Solomon, Vice
Chair, and Members, Committee on Water, Land and Housing

Hearing: Tuesday, 03/01/11; 1:15 p.m.; CR 225

Aloha and good afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is KananiKaaiawahia Bulawan, I'm a resident of Waianae, a homeowner, and the retired executive director for Waianae Community Outreach a non-profit organization serving the homeless population, both unsheltered on the Leeward Coast and sheltered in the Emergency shelter located in Kalaeloa. In addition, I am the current Leeward Housing Coalition Coordinator. However, I speak as an individual.

I would like to offer suggestions to this bill regarding HHFDC, DHS/HPO, and the Hawaii Association of Realtors to identify state-owned, state-managed, and other government and privately-owned or managed vacant housing units that can be used for affordable housing. Avoid wasting money of which we don't have and be more proactive in effective opportunities and solutions.

In the bill, page 1 lines 12-14 indicate your findings. Page 2 lines 6-10 indicates the problem and pages 2-3 sections 2-3 is your possible solution. Is getting a report of vacancies, putting an inventory together and determine who owns these properties the answer in resolving homelessness? I believe in our state agencies and Kuleana organizations can work together and have this report. Aren't they doing that now?

The findings I have, there is a need to develop housing that will address the very-low, low to moderate income families and individuals. The problem is the currently vacant units in "affordable" housing whether state-owned or managed and privately-owned or managed are not available due to disrepair or are not at the "affordable" reach of the clients. Moreover, those that are in transitional housing programs with a limit of 24 months are awaiting for openings to these "affordable rentals" but for the lack of "good credit report" and other possible "criminal history" will not be able to occupy these units. So they enter a "rehabilitation" (transitional housing) program and are being told you will never recover from your past. The solutions, there should be levels of rehabilitation, i.e. develop housing or amend current housing rules that will identify the tiers of "affordability", the transformation in life-styles based on transitional housing programs offered i.e. budgeting, general housekeeping, family and community responsibility. And I

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know there are many other opportunities that can be used to defray cost of rehabbing a despair unit, i.e. training to build, repair and maintain a home whether these units are in public or private owned or managed projects.

As mentioned above are just some of many other opportunities that can be utilized if the "right" people are at the table with the "right information" and the "right" rules are in place. I'm sure I don't need to remind you that Homelessness is a very complicated game to play. We need to find the right rules that apply to the game and the level of the game, will be new at it (at-risk), a little familiar (short-term), advanced (several times over several periods) and pro (experienced it on all levels) finding this is the only life-style they have left.

I thank you for giving me this opportunity to offer suggestions that I sense can work because there already existing information from HHFDC/HPHA, DHS/HPO, Hawaii Association of Realtors and the communities that are struggling with transitional inventory and the lack of "affordable" housing. You put these groups together and they have what you are looking for. We are completely surveyed out, let's not continue to focus on the findings and problem but focus on what can change to resolve the programs.