



Committee: Committee on Human Services  
Hearing Date/Time: Thursday, February 3, 2011, 1:15 p.m.  
Place: Conference Room 016  
Re: Testimony of the ACLU of Hawaii in Support of S.B. 900, Relating to Homelessness

Dear Chair Chun Oakland and Members of the Committee on Human Services:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii (“ACLU of Hawaii”) writes in support of S.B. 900, Relating to Homelessness, which seeks to create an interagency council on homelessness. This is exactly the kind of proactive, productive legislation needed to address homelessness in Hawaii.

For too long, legislation – particularly at the County Council level – has focused solely on punitive measures designed to criminalize homelessness. Honolulu was named one of the ten meanest cities in the United States in its treatment of the homeless by The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and The National Coalition for the Homeless, the two preeminent national organizations on homeless policy. *Homes Not Handcuffs: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities*, available at [http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/crimreport/CrimzReport\\_2009.pdf](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/crimreport/CrimzReport_2009.pdf). Hawaii needs a radical change in focus.

S.B. 900 seeks to create a process by which Hawaii can take a comprehensive, long-term view of these complex issues and implement meaningful change. This is precisely the kind of forward-thinking legislation that Hawaii needs.

The mission of the ACLU of Hawaii is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawaii fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawaii is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawaii has been serving Hawaii for over 45 years.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

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