

SB 904



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

COMMENTS (with Amendment) for SB 904 SD1: RELATING TO THE HOMELESS

TO: Senator David Ige, Chair, Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison, Catholic Charities Hawaii

Hearing: Friday, 2/25/11; 9:00 a.m.; CR 211

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB 904, SD1, which would require the Department of Human Services to identify suitable properties for a Housing First program. I am Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison for housing and homeless issues at Catholic Charities Hawaii. Catholic Charities Hawaii strongly supports this bill. We suggest the following amendments:

Suggested Amendment: Merge SB 904, SD1 into SB 912, SD1 (which is also being heard today), to create a Senate Draft 2. Please see our testimony for SB 912 for other amendments suggested for this bill.

Catholic Charities Hawaii supports the implementation of a Housing First model for Hawaii. These types of programs have been very successful in many areas of the Mainland. They have a good track record in assisting homeless people to gain permanent housing and then provide the services needed to keep them in housing and successfully transition off the streets. Catholic Charities Hawaii promotes this model as a way to target the chronically homeless and assist them to transition to permanent housing.

Partners in Care, the Oahu coalition of homeless providers, government representatives and community stakeholders recently compared the public costs for an unsheltered homeless person vs. a resident in Supportive Housing, such as in a Housing First model. They found that the average public cost for an unsheltered homeless person is \$2,897 per month vs. the average public cost for a resident in supportive housing is \$605 per month. Public costs can be decreased by 79% by providing supportive housing with services. (Public costs for homeless people include ER and hospitalization costs, law enforcement, substance abuse or other treatments, social services and outreach, etc.)

This is an important bill to implement the Housing First model in Hawaii. We urge your support for this innovative strategy. Thank you for hearing this bill and for your support to end the crisis in homelessness which is impacting on our neighborhoods, our parks, our economic centers, and especially the people who fall into homelessness.

