



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HB 2547 HD1: MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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: Thursday, 3/29/12, 9:00 am; CR 211

Chair Ige, Chair Kidani, and Members, Committees on Ways & Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 2547 HD1, which makes an emergency appropriation to the Department of Human Services to address the shortfall in the budget for the general assistance program. I am Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison for housing and homelessness issues at Catholic Charities Hawaii. Catholic Charities Hawaii supports this bill.

There is no Senate companion bill for this issue.

Catholic Charities Hawaii is very concerned about the possibility that many persons now on General Assistance will be forced into homelessness if their General Assistance payments are further reduced. The benefit currently is hardly enough to pay rent even at subsidized housing or special housing such as clean and sober homes. The benefit has already been reduced in FY 2012 from \$353 down to \$319 currently. Without an additional appropriation from the legislature, the benefit will be further reduced to \$275 in April 2012. We fear that this may force many of those now collecting General Assistance out of their homes and into homelessness.

It would be much more costly to the State to have to provide homeless services to help these people regain housing, versus keeping them in housing with the General Assistance payments.

We support this emergency appropriation which would enable the Department of Human to continue the General Assistance payments at a very minimal level.

We urge you to support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 2547.





PARTNERS IN CARE

Oahu's Coalition of Homeless Providers

COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HB 2547 HD1: MAKING AN EMERGENCY APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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

FROM: Gladys Peraro, Advocacy Chair, Partners In Care (PIC)

HEARING: Thursday, 3/29/12, 9:00 am; CR 211

Chair Ige, Chair Kidani, and Members, Committees on Ways & Means:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 2547 HD1, which makes an emergency appropriation to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to address the shortfall in the budget for the general assistance program. I am Gladys Peraro, Advocacy Chair, Partners In Care (PIC); our coalition focuses on the needs of homeless persons and strategies to end homelessness. Partners In Care supports this bill.

As there is no Senate companion bill for this issue, Partners In Care is very concerned that if the House bill does not move forward, there is a very real possibility that many persons now on General Assistance will be forced into homelessness when their General Assistance payments are further reduced. The current benefit is scarcely enough to pay rent even at subsidized housing or special housing opportunities such as clean and sober homes. The benefit has already been reduced in FY 2012 from \$353 to \$319, its current level. Without an additional appropriation from the legislature, the benefit will be further reduced to \$275 in April 2012. Our coalition's fear is that this may force many of those now collecting General Assistance out of their homes and into homelessness.

Partners In Care believes it would be more costly to the State to have to provide homeless services to help these families regain housing, rather than keeping them housed with the General Assistance payments.

We support this emergency appropriation, which would enable the Department of Human Services to continue General Assistance payments at the current level.

We urge you to support this bill and thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 2547.

Partners In Care, c/o Aloha United Way, 200 N. Vineyard Blvd. Suite 700
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Partners in Care is a membership organization of homeless service providers, other service professionals, units of local and state government, homeless consumers, and other community representatives located in Hawai'i on O'ahu. It is a planning, coordinating, and advocacy body that develops recommendations for programs and services to fill gaps in the Continuum of Care on O'ahu.

To: The Honorable David Y. Ige, Chair
The Honorable Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Way and Means

From: Laura Robertson Smith, President/CEO
Danielle Moskowitz, Vice President of Human Services
Wanda Villareal, Director of Developmental Disabilities Services
Scott Fuji, Assistant Director of Community Services
Goodwill Industries of Hawaii, Inc.

Date: March 28, 2012

Re: **Testimony in Strong Support of HB 2547 HD1 – Making an Emergency Appropriation to the Department of Human Services.**

Goodwill Industries of Hawaii, Inc. (Goodwill) is among the largest human service non-profit organizations in Hawaii. Our mission is to help people find and succeed in employment. Last year, we served over 15,000 people statewide and placed 1,502 people into jobs in our community. Goodwill has 52 years of experience assisting people who have employment barriers find jobs and gain self-sufficiency. A significant percentage of the people we serve are low-income individuals and families receiving financial assistance from the Department of Human Services.

Goodwill understands the direct impact that any cuts to financial assistance benefits can have on the well-being and safety of the economically vulnerable residents of our state who have very limited socioeconomic resources available to them. Any further reductions in financial assistance payments further increases the chances that low-income persons will become homeless or otherwise find themselves in dire situations which jeopardize their health and safety.

Reducing or stopping the monthly general assistance payments to this vulnerable population negatively impacts the community and poses a real threat to the individuals' health and safety. To prevent another reduction of general assistance payments starting April 2012, an emergency appropriation for the General Assistance Program (HMS 204) is urgently needed.

Goodwill submits this testimony in strong support of HB 2547 HD1 which makes an emergency appropriation to the Department of Human Services.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.