



Help the Hawaii Homeless
1777 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 116 #89,
Honolulu, Hawaii 96815 808.271.8054
thehawaiihomeless.org tisha@thehawaiihomeless.org

LATE TESTIMONY

House Committee on Finance
Thursday, February 24, 2011, Room 308

RE: Testimony in Support of HB70, with amendments.

Aloha Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee and members of the Finance Committee,

HB70, the return-to-home program, assists homeless people who have come to Hawaii from the Mainland, have a support system in their hometown, and would like to return, but do not have the funds. We have many on our Family Reunification Program wait list that do qualify for assistance already. Those that do not will remain on our organization's wait list.

Our organization supports this bill with suggested amendments. We believe that the sooner we are able to reunite a homeless neighbor with their families, the sooner they can begin to heal, be housed and find employment. Ideally, we would like to catch them before they even have a chance to apply for TANF assistance.

Unfortunately, this bill may, in fact, be an invitation to stay an entire year, amply supplied with food stamps and a ticket back home. Not including medical or cash benefits, we could spend \$314 per person in TANF (food stamp benefits) per month.

Currently, Help the Hawaii Homeless has 18 persons on our wait list. Most of them are receiving TANF benefits. Let's say 9 of them are on TANF for one year, that amounts to \$33,912 for our state. \$33,912 that our local families ARE NOT receiving because of these additional homeless that don't want to be here and want to go home.

We've thought about many ideas to "safeguard" the government from a "free ticket" mentality. Our program does encourage our homeless neighbors to "earn" their way home by participating in fund raisers that earns funds towards their cause. This gives them an opportunity to do what they intended to do anyway and with dignity.

We would be happy to assist the State in reuniting the homeless with their families as soon as possible.

Mahalo nui loa,

Tisha Woytenko
President & Executive Director
Help the Hawaii Homeless



LATE TESTIMONY STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

February 24, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Interim Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 70, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO THE HOMELESS**

Hearing: Thursday, February 24, 2011; 1:30 p.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 70, H.D. 1, is to establish a Return-to-home Program to assist eligible homeless individuals to return to their home state if there is a support network available and able to receive the individuals. Appropriates general funds and is effective July 1, 2011.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services has reservations regarding this measure. We are concerned about the cost implications generated by this proposal and the impact it may have on the priorities in the Executive Biennium Budget.

Although the Department's request to restore funding for the Homeless Program staffing has been advanced, once these positions are filled, they will be fully involved in implementing administrative rules, procurement and monitoring of the existing Homeless programs.

To effectively implement the proposed Return-to-home Program, the homeless individual must be willing to return, with family and acquaintances willing to accept the

individual. The Department estimates that at least three (3) additional staff positions will need to be established for this program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.

Committee on Finance
Representative Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Representative Marilyn Lee, Vice Chair

LATE TESTIMONY

STRONG SUPPORT

HB 70

Hello Chair Oshiro, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Rose Martinez, and I am testifying in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB 70.

This bill helps to address the current homeless problem that we face here in Hawaii. Homelessness is not an issue we can ignore. Just step outside of this building and you will see homeless people sleeping on the grounds of Iolani Palace, the bus stop across the street, and even a few on the first floor of this building. Everywhere you go there is a constant reminder of the problem.

By supporting this bill, we are taking a proactive step to help these people. In order for these people to qualify, they must have a support system in place in their home state that is able to assist them. Unlike other states that are just handing one way tickets to their homeless out of state, this bill will ensure that the homeless will receive the help they need when they are sent back.

I urge you to pass this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.