



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

COMMENTS ON HB 753: Relating to Homeless Programs

TO: Representative Rida T. R. Cabanilla, Chair, Representative Pono Chong, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Housing

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

Hearing: Wednesday, 2/9/11; 8:30 am; Conference Room 325

Chair Cabanilla, Vice Chair Chong, and Members of the Committee on Housing:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 753, which would require the Department of Human Services (DHS) in consultation with others, to develop temporary nighttime parking lots to provide safe overnight locations for homeless individuals who would otherwise sleep in their motor vehicles on public or private lands. Catholic Charities Hawaii **supports the intent** of this bill.

For this initiative to be successful, much consultation is needed with the counties and/or various groups who may be interested in participating. There needs to be planning to ensure that these are safe environments for the families and the communities surrounding them. The bill calls for the homeless individuals to be screened, prohibits alcohol or drug use, and requires provision of outreach, job counseling and health care services. There maybe costs like security which are critical to success.

We are concerned that the current State funds for homeless services are already stretched thin. We would not want to see new projects negatively impact on existing services. We urge the Legislature to provide additional funds to cover any program costs for this new initiative.

For DHS to implement this new initiative, it may also require additional staffing for the Homeless Programs Office which is severely understaffed. The Homeless Programs Office must give first priority to administering current State and federal funding for homeless programs across the State of Hawaii. Their critical functions are already being impacted by the severe cut in funding (only 3 staff are funded, down from 9 positions).

Catholic Charities Hawaii urges you to appropriate additional funds to support this project if it is to be a priority for the Legislature.

We thank the Legislature for your dedication to finding solutions to homelessness. We appreciate your efforts to involve all parts of the community to solve this crisis.

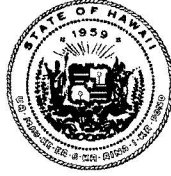


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February 9, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Rida T.R. Cabanilla, Chair
House Committee on Housing

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Interim Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 753 – RELATING TO HOMELESS PROGRAMS**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 9, 2011; 8:30 a.m.
Conference Room 325, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 753 is to require the Department of Human Services, in consultation with the counties and any interested private homeless assistance programs, to develop temporary nighttime parking lots to provide safe overnight locations for homeless individuals who would otherwise sleep in their motor vehicles on public or private roads or property.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this measure to seek alternative solutions for the homeless who have no safe place to sleep. The idea has been tried in various other locations, and Kauai County Continuum of Care has been working toward a similar model in Kauai County over the past two years. They have encountered numerous delays due to security concerns - how to provide proper screening and limit the number in the parking lot; cost issues relating to the provision of sanitation facilities; and liability concerns.

They were very close to starting a model program with a church, but the senior management decided that the liability concerns could not be overcome. The Continuum is now working with another church to start up the model.

The Department of Human Services cannot support the measure at this time, because the homeless programs staff is already overwhelmed with managing all of the shelter and programs with a staff that has gone from ten to three. We ask that the measure be deferred in favor of learning from the Kauai model that is being developed.

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