

SB 2594

Measure Title: RELATING TO THE HOMELESS.

Report Title: Homeless; Homeless Programs Office; Designated Safe Areas; Keiki Caucus

Description: Requires the homeless programs office of the department of human services to establish designated safe areas for homeless persons to live until permanent housing becomes available. Requires the homeless programs office to establish rules and a code of conduct for the designated safe areas; requires partnership with nonprofit and community service organizations and coordination with state and county law enforcement officials for the safety of individuals residing in the designated safe areas.

Companion:

Package: Keiki, Housing and Homeless

Current Referral: HMS/PGM, WAM

Introducer(s): CHUN OAKLAND, TOKUDA, Baker, Ige, Kidani

HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Boulevard, Suite 702 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 531-2198 Fax: (808) 534-1199

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

Daryl Selman, President

Judith F. Clark, Executive Director

Aloha House

American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii

Assistive Technology Resource Ctrs. of HI
Bay Clinic, Inc.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Honolulu

Big Island Substance Abuse Council

Blueprint for Change

Bobby Benson Center

Catholic Charities Hawaii

Central Oahu Youth Services Assn.

Child and Family Service

Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii

Domestic Violence Action Center

EPIC, Inc.

Family Support Hawaii

Friends of the Missing Child Center of HI

Hale Kipa, Inc.

Hale 'Opio Kauai, Inc.

Hawaii Behavioral Health

Hawaii Student Television

Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition

Hina Mauka Teen Care

Hui Malama Learning Center

Kahi Mohala Behavioral Health

Kama'aina Kids, Inc.

KEY (Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth)
Project

Kids Behavioral Health

Kids Hurt Too

Kokua Kalih Valley

Kula No Na Poe Hawaii

Lanai Community Health Center

Life Foundation

Marimed Foundation

The Maui Farm, Inc.

Maui Youth and Family Services

Palama Settlement

P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.

Parents and Children Together (PACT)

Planned Parenthood of Hawaii

Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center
Kona Unit

REAL

Salvation Army Family Intervention Svcs.

Salvation Army Family Treatment Svcs.

Sex Abuse Treatment Center

Susannah Wesley Community Center

The Catalyst Group

The Children's Alliance of Hawaii

Waikiki Health Center

Women Helping Women

YouthVision

YWCA of Kauai

February 1, 2012

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
And members of the Committee on Human Services

COMMENT ON SB2594 RELATING TO THE HOMELESS

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, is providing comments on SB 2594 Relating to the Homeless.

Runaway, homeless and street youth are an often overlooked segment of the homeless population and one that has unique needs and challenges. These youth are separated from their families and are living without adult support and guidance. Hawaii Youth Services Network's street outreach and shelter programs reach more than 700 runaway and homeless youth annually.

The proposed safe areas are not an appropriate place for minors who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian. Youth living in a large encampment of unrelated adults are at risk of physical or sexual abuse and exploitation.

In addition, it may not be legal to house minors in such a facility. State licensing regulations for youth shelters do not allow mixed populations of minors and adults. The rules do not even allow an 18 year old to live in a youth shelter with 16 and 17 year olds.

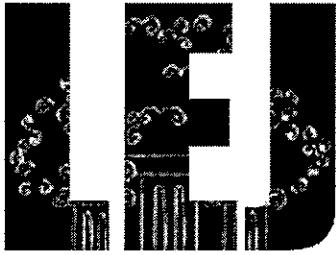
Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director

HAWAII APPLESEED CENTER



LAW
AND
ECONOMIC
JUSTICE

Board of Directors

David Derauf, M.D.
Marc Fleischaker, Esq.
Naomi C. Fujimoto, Esq.
Patrick Gardner, Esq.
Francis T. O'Brien, Esq.
David J. Reber, Esq.

Executive Director

Victor Geminiani, Esq.

Date: February 8, 2012

To: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Senate Chair, Human Services Committee

Senator Will Espero Senate Chair, Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs Committee

From: Victor Geminiani, Executive Director

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice

Re: Testimony in support of SB2594

Scheduled for a hearing on February 2, 2012 at 1:15 pm

Dear Chair Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair Will Espero, and committee members;

Thank you for an opportunity to testify in strong support of SB2594 which would establish designated safe areas for homeless persons to live until permanent housing becomes available. My name is Victor Geminiani and I am the Executive Director of the Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice (formerly Lawyers for Equal Justice). Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice (LEJ) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) law firm created to advocate on behalf of low income individuals and families in Hawai'i on civil legal issues of statewide importance and to complement the assistance provided by existing legal services providers in the state. Our core mission is to help our clients gain access to the resources, services, and fair treatment that they need to realize their opportunities for self-achievement and economic security.

Over the past several years, we have seen the crisis of homelessness expand at an alarming rate throughout all of the islands. Today, Hawai'i has the third highest homelessness rate among the states and the numbers of those living on our streets and beaches continues to grow. There is little disagreement on one of the root causes of this crisis: truly affordable transitional and permanent housing is in very short supply. Even in the best of economic times, thousands of our low income individuals and families struggled to find affordable shelter. The recession has made their struggle even more difficult.

A careful look at the economics of shelter in Hawai'i underlines the barriers we confront in solving our homelessness crisis. Traditionally, families have been advised not to spend more than 30% of their income on shelter. The fair market rent for a two-bedroom home in our state is \$1,616, while the mean average wage for a renter in Hawai'i is \$13.65 an hour. At this rate of pay, a single wage earner would have to work 91 hours weekly, or 2.3 wage earners would have to work 40 hours per week to afford the home. Hawai'i rents exceed the national average by 200%, and 75.4% of poor households in Hawai'i spend more than 50% of their income on shelter.

There will always be a segment of the homeless population who do not reside in our current homeless shelter system because of lack of space, eligibility, or personal choice. For many of those living on our streets, beaches, or parks, permissible temporary encampment would be highly preferable to continuing the costly periodic sweeps which accomplish little but temporarily hiding the problem from view. Successful models do exist in cities on the mainland. Most have developed sensible restrictions, including the enforcement of strict rules against the use of drugs or alcohol and a prohibition against all forms violence. Another common component is the emphasis placed on cultivating the campers involvement in the selection of new campers and the

development and enforcement of camp rules. A substantial benefit of all successful models is building a sense of community among the residents that often provides a strong foundation for residents to become empowered and deal more effectively with the challenges they face.

Again, thank you for providing us with an opportunity to testify in strong support of SB2594.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor", written in a cursive style.

Victor Geminiani,
Executive Director

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, AND MILITARY
AFFAIRS

ATTN: CHAIRS SUZANNE CHUN OAKLAND AND WILL ESPERO
Testimony Providing Comments on SB2594, RELATING TO THE HOMELESS
February 9, 2012, 1:15 p.m.
Conference Room 016

Aloha,

The Leeward Housing Coalition respectfully provides the following opposition regarding SB2595.

The Leeward Housing Coalition for the past two years has been working towards efforts to address housing for the homeless and those who need truly affordable housing via rent or purchase.

We have analyzed the number of shelters provided on the Leeward Coast versus the number of individuals and families that continue to be un-sheltered. There has been significant progress made by all shelters on the numbers of individuals serviced and continuing progress is being made all the time through our Outreach workers who continually interface with our un-sheltered homeless and find solutions for their particular situations.

It is the belief of the Leeward Housing Coalition that the most productive efforts to be made are to provide more emphasis on permanent housing that our low to moderate income families can afford for themselves and to expand the current shelter services to include some consideration for pets (i.e. perhaps a kennel nearby for the pets to be visited while the people are working on their own situations, etc.)

The proposal as stated essentially allows for the establishment of more shelters” albeit “unwalled” shelters without identifying additional monies for the management of these facilities or for the additional costs of providing the services as outlined in this bill. This oversight has the potential to effect the on-going management of the current shelters and the work being done if current funding must be diluted to cover the additional shelters being discussed.

In addition, in speaking with the Outreach workers who go out into the field to speak with the unsheltered on a regular basis, one of the many reasons given for not going into a shelter is the “rules” that they must abide by in a shelter. In this bill, these safe areas are essentially establishing shelters without walls but with rules and a code of conduct not unlike the set-up already established.

It is for all of these reasons that we do not support “safe areas” be established on the Leeward Coast.

We have no position for establishment of “safe areas” in other communities as each community must analyze and consider for their own benefits whether a “safe area” would work for the homeless that would reside there.

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 2594: RELATING TO THE HOMELESS

TO: The Committee on Human Services and the Committee on Public Safety, Government Operations, and Military Affairs

FROM: Alika Campbell, MSW

Hearing: Thursday, 2/9/12; 1:15 p.m.; Conference room 016

Senators,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 2594. While I think the idea behind this bill is a good one, it is the operationalization that I am opposed to.

As you know, homelessness is a complex issue that requires varied and creative responses; there is no “silver bullet” that can solve Hawaii’s growing problem. The idea of a place where individuals could safely stay could be an important missing piece of the current continuum of care, but the requirements in this bill may well undermine some of the core principles of the safe zones/tent city programs that have been working successfully in other states.

I encourage everyone to read the National Coalition for the Homeless report entitled Tent Cities in America: A Pacific Coast Report as it provides a well researched study of a variety of approaches that have been employed on the West Coast. What struck me when I read this report was that the most successful models shared a key aspect in common; they are all fundamentally consumer driven. Some were developed by consumers and most are governed by consumers (to varying degrees). It seems to me that the involvement of the participants in planning and running the “program” provides a level of ownership in the process and the site that is fundamental to the success of both the program and the participants.

While I am aware that Hawaii does not wish to build “tent cities,” I think some of the lessons from other states could point the way toward implementing local safe havens/safe zones. As such, I think there are some serious flaws to this bill that compel me to oppose it despite my belief in the core concept. The fact that this would be another HPO “shelter” program with all the rules that come with that would be an instant barrier for some of the most visible individuals experiencing homelessness. Yes, rules are important for maintaining basic health and safety concerns, but the more successful tent cities cited in the report highlight that when given a chance to develop the program/rules on their own the consumers often come up with rules that are stricter than what agency staff might have proposed. If the consumers have a hand in developing the rules there will be less resistance to living by them. Additionally, passage of this bill would probably require finding an agency that was willing to run/manage the “shelter” which might be difficult. Lastly, because this bill requires HPO to fund a new program it would probably result in unfunding existing services. If there is new or “extra” money that would be used to fund this new program that might be another story, but then it would be worth considering using that money to develop affordable housing.

The National Coalition for the Homeless report can be found here - http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/tent_cities_pr.html

Thank you for allowing me to testify in opposition to SB 2594.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Saturday, February 04, 2012 12:58 PM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: robertscottwall@yahoo.com
Subject: Testimony for SB2594 on 2/9/2012 1:15:00 PM

Testimony for HMS/PGM 2/9/2012 1:15:00 PM SB2594

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: Support
Testifier will be present: Yes
Submitted by: Scott Wall
Organization: Individual
E-mail: robertscottwall@yahoo.com
Submitted on: 2/4/2012

Comments:

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 01, 2012 1:41 PM
To: HMS Testimony
Cc: toddhairgrove@hotmail.com
Subject: Testimony for SB2594 on 2/9/2012 1:15:00 PM

Testimony for HMS/PGM 2/9/2012 1:15:00 PM SB2594

Conference room: 016
Testifier position: Support
Testifier will be present: Yes
Submitted by: Todd Hairgrove
Organization: Individual
E-mail: toddhairgrove@hotmail.com
Submitted on: 2/1/2012

Comments: