



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

House Committee on Finance
H.B. 1934 HD1, Housing

Testimony of Lynn N. Fallin
Deputy Director, Behavioral Health Administration

February 21, 2014

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health (DOH) appreciates the intent of this measure as
2 amended, provided that its enactment does not reduce or replace priorities within our Executive
3 Supplemental Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2014-2015.

4 **Fiscal Implications:** Sections 2 and 3 appropriate unspecified sums for substance abuse treatment and
5 mental health support services and clean and sober housing support services, respectively.

6 **Purpose and Justification:** Sections 2 and 3 of the measure appropriate unspecified sums, to be
7 expended in Fiscal Year 2014-2015 by DOH for substance abuse treatment and mental health support
8 services for individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and clean and sober housing
9 support services.

10 Persons affected by substance use and mental health are at higher risk for homelessness, chronic
11 health conditions, involvement in the criminal justice system, social isolation and often become high
12 users of health care services. Programs that provide dual treatment focus both on the substance and on
13 mental health stabilization. Treatment episodes are generally longer in duration and more
14 comprehensive; typically, providing more positive client outcomes and a higher rate of long term
15 recovery. Long term recovery is also strongly tied to stable housing that is drug and alcohol free.

1 Stable housing is a critical component in the continuum of substance abuse treatment and
2 recovery. Approximately 17 percent of clients served by ADAD contracted providers did not have
3 stable housing at admission. At discharge and follow-up, unstable housing status was reduced to
4 14 percent and 7 percent, respectively.

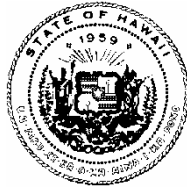
5 As a member of the Governor's Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness which is
6 comprised of community leaders, state department directors, and federal agency representatives, DOH is
7 involved with the development of a unified plan on addressing homelessness by increasing transitional
8 and permanent housing options and acquiring increased federal funding.

9 We are aware of the need for clean and sober housing support services for those who are
10 homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Within DOH, efforts to address homeless clients with mental
11 health, substance use and co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders are coordinated
12 between the Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Adult Mental Health Divisions to ensure that clients receive
13 appropriate care. It should be noted, however, that as needs are identified and priorities are assigned to
14 address the issue of homelessness, the proposed services in this measure must also be viewed within the
15 context of the Department's Executive Supplemental Budget Request.

16 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



PATRICIA McMANAMAN
DIRECTOR

BARBARA A. YAMASHITA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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

February 21, 2014

MEMORANDUM:

TO: The Honorable Sylvia Luke, Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Barbara Yamashita, Deputy Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1934, H.D. 1 – RELATING TO HOUSING**

Hearing: Friday, February 21, 2014; 11:00 a.m.
Conference Room 308; State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purposes of H.B. 1934, H.D. 1, is to appropriate unspecified amounts to various programs that provide housing, housing assistance, and supportive services to individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and amends the structure and composition of the homelessness working group.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) appreciates the intent of this measure to provide funding for a variety of programs that impact our State's ability to address homelessness provided it does not adversely affect priorities set forth in the Executive Supplemental Budget.

Regarding Part I, Sections 2 and 3 of this bill, the DHS defers to the Department of Health.

Regarding Part I, Section 4, for the shallow subsidy rental assistance program, the Department appreciates the Legislature's consideration for funding for staffing and administrative expenses for the implementation of this program.

Regarding Part II for the Housing First program, the Department asks that the Legislature support the Department's priorities as requested in the Executive Supplemental Budget submitted by Governor Abercrombie which contains a request for \$1,500,000 for continuation of the Housing First Program. The second year of the State's Housing First program will be favorably impacted by the Department of Health's recent award from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant for intensive support services for unsheltered homeless who have severe psychiatric disabilities and/or co-occurring substance abuse disorders. Legislative support of the Governor's budget request will allow the Housing First program to be operated for a third fiscal year with substantial opportunity for leveraging of funding with the DOH's program.

Housing First is a nationally recognized best practice that was implemented for the first time in Hawaii in 2012. The Housing First program, administered by DHS, has been successful in engaging and placing some of urban Honolulu's most chronically homeless and vulnerable individuals into stable housing. A rich array of support services (substance abuse, mental health, general health/disability treatment) has been accessed to help provide the "wrap around" services that are necessary to maintain this population in stable housing situations.

The funding requested in the Executive Supplemental Budget for the Housing First Program is critical to addressing housing for the chronically homeless. Including Housing First funding in the DHS base budget will allow the issuing of contracts for multiple years and

bring stability for the providers resulting in more stable housing options for Hawaii's homeless.

Part III of this bill would provide unspecified funding for a homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing program. The Department has yet to implement the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing program funded by the 2013 Legislature due to the lack of staffing resources. We note that the Homeless Programs Office (HPO) already administers HUD funded HPRP funds (totaling approximately \$162,000) on behalf of the Neighbor Islands. The City and County of Honolulu administers the HUD funded HPRP funds (totaling approximately \$560,000) on Oahu. Once a mechanism is established to expend the FY2014 appropriated monies, the DHS will have a vehicle to contract for the implementation of these services.

Regarding Part IV, of this bill for Continuum of Care, the DHS appreciates the intent to provide state matching funds for the HUD-funded Continuum of Care (CoC) permanent supportive housing programs across the State, and provides the following comments. The state matching funds are used by agencies to leverage approximately \$8 million of HUD federal funds to house over 500 eligible disabled homeless individuals and families. Many agencies utilize matching funds to pay a portion of the very substantial administrative demands of the program. For example, every month providers must not only work with clients placed in housing and ensure support services are provided, but they must also pay landlords for every person who is housed. The Department suggests that consideration be given to allow the City and County of Honolulu (which would administer the funding for Oahu providers via a Memorandum of Agreement) to request reasonable administrative fees.

Regarding Part V and VI, the Department notes that the Homeless Assistance Working Group (HAWG) as established in Act 222, Session Laws of Hawaii 2013, was successful in engaging different components of the community to address homelessness and its solutions. The Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) is tasked with much of the same work as HAWG, and the HICH has successfully embarked on an ambitious agenda to end homelessness. The HICH statewide plan as well as systemic changes to the provision of homeless services (aligned with national initiatives and evidence based practices such as Housing First) are being implemented. The HAWG is duplicative of the intent of the HICH. The consolidation of the efforts of the HAWG into the HICH would be a more effective use of resources.

The DHS respectfully requests that the Legislature provide additional staffing and resources sufficient to support any additional programs and services it wishes the Homeless Programs Office (HPO) to implement and administer. The HPO works hard to keep pace with its current workload but as noted in the 2013 DHS Single Audit report, the current HPO staff of the Program Administrator, two clerical staff, and three program specialists, were insufficient to properly oversee and administer its myriad of contracts. The HPO gratefully acknowledges the Legislature's authorization of an additional program specialist position last session, and the HPO is aggressively working to establish that position. Any new additions of programs and services will, however, necessitate additional staffing.

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

February, 21, 2014

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To: House Committee on Finance
Re: HB1934, HD1

Aloha Chair Luke and the members of the committee,

On behalf of the Community Alliance for Mental Health along with United Self Help we strongly support HB1934, HD1.

The need to fund the various programs to address homelessness and the suffering mental health and substance abuse systems should be paramount. This need is being pushed not only by medical necessity but by public outcry over the fact that the most vulnerable of our Ohana are camped out on the streets.

In the long run though the need to fund these programs is being propelled by the realization that it is in everyone's economic best interest to address homelessness in a medically sound and economically efficient manner.

This is actually easily proven. Medicaid is the single largest line item on the state's budget. According to the Centers for Medicaid Studies report for 2012 ninety percent of those Medicaid dollars were spent on only fourteen percent of Medicaid users. Call them the low hanging fruit.

One Medicaid patient alone used two hundred ambulance rides to the emergency room. The only sane way to address this problem is to end homelessness, get our sickest and most vulnerable citizens into the appropriate treatment programs and bring them back to health.

Give them something to do and we can restore lives. The cherry on top is the fact that the taxpayers get to save millions of dollars that can be applied to other projects sorely in need of funding such as schools, roads, and building housing.

Therefore we strongly support passage of HB1934, HD1.

Scott Wall
VP/ Legislative Advocate
Community Alliance for Mental Health

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**Community
Alliance *for*
Mental Health**



House Committee on Finance

The Hon. Sylvia Luke, Chair

The Hon. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair

The Hon. Aaron Ling Johnson, Vice Chair

Testimony on House Bill 1934

Relating to Housing

Submitted by Robert Hirokawa, Chief Executive Officer

February 21, 2014, 11:00 am, Room 308

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA), which represents the federally qualified community health centers in Hawaii, supports House Bill 1934.

Housing is health. Hawaii's community health centers provided health care and other services to 12,459 unique patients experiencing homelessness in 2012. Housing, the lack of affordable housing, and homelessness are all social determinants of health: they are circumstances that influence the health of individuals and the health of communities, more so than an individual's genetic code.

House Bill 1934 provides a comprehensive approach to assisting individuals and families experiencing homelessness through a variety of services including medical assistance, shallow-subsidy rental assistance, investment in the Housing First model for chronically homeless individuals, funding to prevent homelessness and provide rapid re-housing, funding for the continuum of care permanent supportive housing programs, and funding for the construction and demonstration of innovative temporary housing solutions as they relate to the working group's findings and recommendations. In addition this measure makes changes to the current homeless assistance working group of which the HPCA has been a participant. Although helping individuals and families out of homelessness and into permanent, stable housing takes a combination of efforts around housing, health care, employment opportunities, child care, and other issues, House Bill 1934 provides an array of housing options and investment in substance abuse and mental health needs that is a good start to helping some of our most vulnerable neighbors.

For these reasons, the HPCA supports this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



PARTNERS IN CARE

Oahu's Coalition of Homeless Providers

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1934: RELATING TO HOUSING

TO: Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair; Rep. Scott Nishimoto, Vice Chair; Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair; and members of the House Committee on Finance
FROM: Peter K. Mattoon, Advocacy Committee Co-Chair, Partners In Care
Hearing: **Friday, February 21, 2014, 11:00 AM, Room 308**

Dear Chair Luke, Vice Chair Nishimoto, Vice Chair Johanson, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support** of House Bill 1934, appropriating funding for a variety of critical programs targeted at addressing and ending homelessness. I am Peter K. Mattoon, and I am an Advocacy Committee Co-Chair for Partners In Care (PIC), a coalition of care providers focusing on the needs of homeless persons and strategies to end homelessness. Partners In Care supports this bill as a means to provide multiple pathways out of homelessness. We prefer the language in this bill over that in HB 1842, which has similar provisions but uses the term “shelter plus care” to describe permanent supportive housing programs. The term “shelter plus care” is no longer used by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development and has been replaced with “Continuum of Care,” as is done in this bill. Partners In Care supports:

Part II: Shallow Subsidy Program funding of \$1 million:

Many homeless families work to attain self-sufficiency, and even once they find employment, they still struggle to find affordable housing. For many, public housing or deeply subsidized housing is all they can afford, yet the long wait for units or other housing subsidies means that these households languish in transitional housing. Under this program, families will pay 40 percent of their income toward rent which will then be augmented by a maximum subsidy of \$300 to cover the gap between what they can pay and market rent. This program will provide another route to stable housing for families who are ready to rent.

Part III: Housing First Programs funding of \$1.5 million :

Housing First is a best practice that places chronically homeless individuals in permanent housing with intensive support services. Individuals are stabilized as a result of permanent housing and comprehensive support services. As a result, costs such as hospitalization, emergency services, and incarceration are dramatically reduced. Communities around the country have seen large decreases in their chronically homeless population and costs associated with homelessness as a result of Housing First, including reductions in public costs by around 75% for each individual housed, resulting in millions of dollars saved. The research indicates that Housing First is the way to end chronic homelessness. Programs consistently report high success rates of keeping residents in permanent housing. We respectfully urge you to add this funding to the **base budget** for the program.

Part IV: Permanent supportive housing funding of \$500,000 to provide matching funds for continuum of permanent supportive housing programs funded by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development: These programs draw down about \$8 million in federal housing subsidies for homeless individuals with disabilities. Currently, 600 homeless individuals with disabilities are able to maintain housing in our communities as a result of these programs. However, service providers must match these federal funds and provide the wraparound services needed to keep these individuals housed. By funding these programs, the state will be helping homeless individuals stabilize their lives and remain housed while also leveraging a large amount of federal funding.

Again, thank you for providing Partners In Care the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 1934 providing funds for solutions to homelessness, including Housing First, the shallow rental subsidy, and Continuum of Care permanent supportive housing programs.

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 Oahu. It is a planning, coordinating, and advocacy body that develops recommendations for programs and services to fill gaps in the Continuum of Care on Oahu.



PROTECTING HAWAII'S OHANA, CHILDREN, UNDER SERVED, ELDERLY AND DISABLED

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TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair
Members, Committee on Finance

FROM: Scott Morishige, Executive Director, PHOCUSED

HEARING: House Committee on Finance
Friday, February 21, 2014 at 11:00 a.m. in Conf. Rm. 308

Testimony in Support of HB1934 HD1, Relating to Housing

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in regards to HB1934 HD1, which appropriates funds for a range of critical programs aimed at addressing and ending homelessness in Hawaii. PHOCUSED is a statewide coalition of health, housing, and human services organizations committed to strengthening policies and programs that benefit the marginalized and underserved in Hawaii. PHOCUSED **strongly supports** the sections of this bill that provide appropriations to continue the State's existing Housing First and Shallow Subsidy rental assistance programs, and provide match funding for the HUD Continuum of Care Permanent Supportive Housing programs.

As a community, it is critical that we support a comprehensive array of programs and services that aid Hawaii's homeless individuals and families in their efforts to obtain and maintain permanent, stable housing.

The programs described in HB1934, such as Housing First not only assist in providing housing stability for homeless individuals and families, but also results in public cost savings by reducing public expenditures relating to hospitalization, emergency services, and incarceration of homeless individuals. Research has shown that the Housing First approach in particular has reduced public costs in other major metropolitan areas (i.e. Denver, Los Angeles, and Seattle) by as much as 75% for individuals, resulting in millions of dollars saved for those communities.

Once again, PHOCUSED strongly urges your support of this bill and your support of a comprehensive approach to addressing the critical issue of homelessness in Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact PHOCUSED at 521-7462 or by e-mail at admin@phocused-hawaii.org.

Aloha United Way

200 N. Vineyard Blvd., Suite 700
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817-3938
Telephone (808) 536-1951
Fax (808) 543-2222
Website: www.auw.org



Aloha United Way

Cover Sheet

Testifying Agency: Aloha United Way
Kim Gennaula, President & CEO

House Committee on Finance

Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair
Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair

Friday, February 21, 2014 at 11:00 A.M.

Conference Room 308

HB 1934, HD1: Relating to Housing: Testimony in Support

Aloha United Way

200 N. Vineyard Blvd., Suite 700
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817-3938
Telephone (808) 536-1951
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Website: www.auw.org



February 19, 2014

House Committee on Finance
Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair
Friday, February 21, 2014 at 11:00 A.M.
Conference Room 308

HB 1934, HD1: Relating to Housing - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Sylvia Luke, Vice Chairs Scott Y. Nishimoto & Aaron Ling Johanson and Committee Members:

Homelessness continues to be one of our state's most serious and persistent social problems because the causes of homelessness are complex. Addressing these complex issues will require continuous effort and coordinated actions in many related areas like substance abuse, mental illness, work skills development and employment, emergency shelters, transitional housing and affordable housing.

Aloha United Way supports HB 1934, HD1 which would fund critical programs to address homelessness, including Housing First, Continuum of Care permanent supportive housing, shallow subsidy rental assistance program, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and the homeless assistance working group.

As a community, it is critical that we support a comprehensive array of programs and services that aid Hawaii's homeless individuals and families in their efforts to obtain and maintain permanent, stable housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We urge your favorable consideration of HB 1934, HD1.

Sincerely,



Kim Gennaula
President & Chief Executive Officer

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Victor Geminiani, Esq.

Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting HB 1934 Relating to Housing
House Committee on Finance
Scheduled for Hearing Friday, February 21, 2014, 11:00 AM, Room 308

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice 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. 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.

Thank you for an opportunity to testify in **strong support** of House Bill 1934, which would fund critical programs to address homelessness, including Housing First, Continuum of Care permanent supportive housing, a shallow subsidy rental assistance program, and other programs. We support:

Housing First funding of \$1.5 million: is an innovative and highly successful approach to housing the most challenging populations of individuals experiencing homelessness. A person who has been chronically homeless needs, first and foremost, stable permanent housing. Once placed in housing, the individual can receive the services and supports necessary to address the underlying issues that lead to homelessness in the first place, such as mental illness or substance use disorders. Housing First has worked around the country, in both urban and rural areas, and kept the most vulnerable individuals housed and improved their quality of life. The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness has long endorsed it as a best practice. Research has also demonstrated the cost-efficacy of this approach: it often costs less to house a chronically homeless person and provide comprehensive supportive services than to leave them unsheltered, due to the high costs of emergency interventions such as ER visits or incarceration that leave individuals homeless. We respectfully urge the committee to include this funding in the program's **base budget**.

Shallow subsidy funding of \$1 million: The shallow subsidy program is targeted to help homeless households who are ready to rent to leave transitional housing and move into a permanent, market rate unit. Many families in transitional housing are ready to rent, but even if they are working full time, their income may be too low to afford market rents. This is no surprise, given that Hawai'i has the highest cost of shelter in the country and a severe shortfall of affordable rentals. Almost three out of four extremely low-income households are paying more than half of their income on rent. For those living in poverty, the severe housing cost burden is even greater. The options for public housing or other subsidies are extremely limited and have long waitlists. As a result of this lack of affordable rentals, families who are ready to rebuild their lives in stable housing are instead stuck in transitional housing. With the shallow subsidy rental assistance program, a household would pay 40 percent of their income in rent and receive a maximum rental assistance payment of \$300 per month. This would help meet the gap for working homeless families who have income but cannot pay a full market rent.

Permanent supportive housing services funding of \$500,000: Permanent supportive housing is another critical tool to helping homeless individuals with a high level of need. By funding Continuum of Care programs, the state will be able to leverage a significant amount of federal funds in housing subsidies.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1934 to fund these critical homeless intervention programs.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1934, HD1: RELATING TO HOUSING

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair, and Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Finance

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

Hearing: Friday, 2/21/14; 11:00 am; CR 308

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Nishimoto, and Members, Committee on Finance:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in support** of **HB 1934**, appropriating funding for a variety of critical programs targeted at addressing and ending homelessness. I am Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison at Catholic Charities Hawaii. We support:

Part I, Section 4: \$1,000,000 for the Shallow Rent Subsidy program to create another pathway out of homelessness for working homeless. Working people have income to pay rent but not a full market rent. In transitional shelters, they have worked hard to change their lives, learn good budgeting skills, get a job and are ready to pay rent—but they still cannot afford market rents. For many homeless people, waiting for public housing seems to be the only option. A shallow rental subsidy of no more than \$300/month, after the family pays 40% of their income for rent, would enable these working people and their families to move into permanent housing.

Part II: \$1,500,000 for ongoing funding for Housing First. We urge that this funding be in the base budget for the department. Housing First is an evidence based initiative for moving chronically homeless people into permanent housing with wrap around services. **Housing First is cost-effective. The City of Seattle found that housing 95 homeless persons with alcoholism saved the city \$4 million in the first year of operation.** It cost \$13,440 per person (including housing costs) to administer their Housing First program, compared with a cost of \$86,062 per person annually before Housing First. Our homeless providers are collaborating with the state, counties, landlords, and other private entities, on Housing First. There is great energy to move forward and make a significant impact on ending chronic homelessness.

Part IV: \$500,000 for matching funds to HUD funded Continuum of Care permanent supportive housing programs. Statewide, these program bring in about \$8 million in federal monies to house homeless persons but they need to match these funds and provide the critical wrap-around services to stabilize them in affordable housing. The federal housing subsidies are the key to ending homelessness for these recipients, who pay 30% of their income on rent with this federal subsidy. The State can greatly leverage its funds with these federal funds to enable over 600 disabled homeless to be re-integrated into our communities and maintain housing.

We urge your support for these important pathways out of homelessness.



CLARENCE T. C. CHING CAMPUS • 1822 Ke'eaumoku Street, Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone (808)373-0356 -- bettylou.larson@catholiccharitieshawaii.org

• www.CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org





**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1934 HD1: RELATING TO HOUSING
WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

TO: Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair;
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair;
Representative Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair;
Members, Committee on Finance

FROM: Jan Harada, CEO, Helping Hands Hawaii

Hearing: Friday, February 21, 2014, 11:00am; CR 308.

Chair Luke, Vice Chairs Nishimoto and Johanson, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1934 HD1, appropriating funding for a variety of critical programs targeted at addressing homelessness in a comprehensive manner. Helping Hands Hawaii strongly supports the sections of this bill that provide appropriations to continue the State's existing Housing First and Shallow Subsidy rental assistance programs, and provide match funding for the HUD Continuum of Care Permanent Supportive Housing programs.

The programs described in HB1934 HD1, such as Housing First not only assist in providing housing stability for homeless individuals and families, but also results in public cost savings by reducing public expenditures relating to hospitalization, emergency services, and incarceration of homeless individuals. Research has shown that the Housing First approach in particular has reduced public costs in other major metropolitan areas (i.e. Denver, Los Angeles, and Seattle) by as much as 75% for individuals, resulting in millions of dollars saved for those communities.

We urge your support for these important components in the continuum of services needed to address the complex issues that present themselves when addressing homelessness.



HAWAII CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

6301 Pali Highway
Kaneohe, HI 96744-5224

Submitted: Online
Hearing on: Friday, February 21, 2014@ 11:00 AM
Conference Room: 308

DATE: February 18, 2014
TO: House Committee on Finance
Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair
Rep. Scott Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair
From: Walter Yoshimitsu, Executive Director
Re: Support for HB 1934 HD 1 Relating to Housing

LATE

Honorable Chair and members of the House Finance Committee, I am Walter Yoshimitsu, **representing the Hawaii Catholic Conference**. The Hawaii Catholic Conference is the public policy voice for the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii, which under the leadership of Bishop Larry Silva, represents Roman Catholics in Hawaii.

We support HB 1934 HD 1 because homelessness continues to be one of the State's most significant and challenging social problems. The Diocese of Honolulu supports any strategic plan that makes homelessness and affordable housing one of its primary areas of focus. For many households in Hawaii at risk of becoming homeless, high housing costs mean skimping on food and medical care, moving frequently to find lower rents—which can interrupt a child's education—creating periods of homelessness. As people of faith, we simply cannot sit back and watch while families fall apart.

SUPPORT FOR HOUSING FIRST INITIATIVE

Research indicates that Housing First is a great way to end chronic homelessness in Hawaii while incorporating much needed support services. People in the community struggling with homelessness are able to stand on a stronger foundation as a result of permanent housing and these comprehensive support services.

Passage of Housing First will, in turn, will ultimately help Hawaii save money on programs aimed at helping the homeless, and will reduce the burden on charities and religious organizations. Some estimates are in the millions!

Housing First is a national model that delivers services in a more dignified and compassionate way by providing people who are homeless with the stability of housing and then offering supportive services to address their barriers to stabilization.

The Hawaii Catholic Conference believes that decent, safe, and affordable housing is a human right. Catholic teaching recognizes that communities and the government have an obligation to ensure the housing needs of all are met, especially poor and vulnerable people and their families. At a time of rising homelessness and when many workers' wages are stagnant and living expenses are rising, it is important to ensure housing security and the Housing First Initiative does just that.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.