

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



HAKIM OUANSAFI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
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BARBARA E. ARASHIRO
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Statement of
Hakim Ouansafi
Hawaii Public Housing Authority
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

AND

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

February 3, 2014 10:00 A.M.
Room 329, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of

House Bill 2561
Relating to Housing

Honorable Chair Hashem, Honorable Chair Carroll and Members of the House Committee on Housing, and Members of the House Committee on Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide you with comments regarding House Bill (H.B.) 2561, relating to housing.

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) offers the following comments on this measure which will restrict occupancy in state low-income public housing to no more than five consecutive years, with exemptions for elderly and disabled tenants.

While there is no doubt that this measure would ensure that more families will be able to participate in the state low-income public housing program, due to the 5 year time limit, additional funding and staffing will be required to administer the programs these families will need to survive without public assistance.

Without additional funding for self-sufficiency training and programs such as job searching skills, education, apprenticeships, assistance with child care, and other employment-related services, some of these families will be in worse conditions than when they were with the state low-income public housing program.

If it is the pleasure of the Committees to pass out this measure, the HPHA would like to respectfully request two amendments. The first amendment would be to change the

age of an elderly person to sixty-two (62) to match with the definition found in Hawaii Revised Statutes §356D-1. The second amendment would be to provide funding in the amount of \$490,000 to either create a Family Self-Sufficiency Branch within the HPHA where residents can access employment training and supportive service programs, or use the funding to hire non-profits to provide these services.

The HPHA appreciates the opportunity to provide the House Committee on Housing and the House Committee on Human Services with the agency's comments regarding H.B. 2561. We thank you very much for your dedicated support.



Community Alliance for Mental Health

February, 3, 2014

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To: House Housing and Human Services Committees
Re: HB 2561

Aloha Chairs Carroll, Hashem, and the members of their committees,

On behalf of the Community Alliance for Mental Health along with United Self Help we ~~oppose~~ HB 2561.

We feel that in a time of economic uncertainty no absolutes should be legislated concerning housing. What happens if in four years another economic bubble burst? We know that there has been a waiting list for Section 8 housing for years but does it really make any sense to displace people so that we can house people? We don't think so.

Scott Wall
VP/Legislative Advocate
Community Alliance for Mental Health

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Homelessness and Affordable Housing Institute
Testimony in favor of H.B. NO. 2561

Committee on Housing
Monday, February 3, 2014, 1000 AM.
State Capitol CR 329

Honorable Chair Hashem and members of the Housing Committee,

I am in strong **support** of HB2561 to impose time limits on low-income public housing. As you know, there is a shortage of readily available public housing in our State.

The shortage of available public housing can only get worse as the City and County of Honolulu is in the process of selling off and shirking its burden of providing affordable public housing. Other counties in Hawaii may follow Honolulu's lead to reduce costs to County governments.

Therefore, it is imperative to maximize the use of Hawaii affordable public housing to its best use and insure a revolving availability to meet the critical and current demand for affordable public housing in the most compelling cases.

The housing shortage problem is exacerbated by families who are occupying the units for a time far exceeding what was intended. Public housing programs are meant to give *temporary* assistance to needy families to gain self-sufficiency and to be able to move into market housing after a reasonable amount of time. It is not meant to be a permanent fix except for those who are disabled or aged and cannot ever be independent.

The Public Housing Authorities that have already imposed time-limits, such as Delaware and Tacoma, Washington, have noted a positive increase in income of housing assistance recipients over the course of their occupancy. When families recognized that their assistance would end at a specific time, they took the appropriate steps to secure private market housing and increase self-sufficiency. I believe that having no time limits undermines the desire and incentive to work toward self-sufficiency and progression.

Because there are currently no time limits for public housing in Hawaii, the occupants have no incentive to work for self-sufficiency and independence and consequently they never leave, and the list of families in need of public housing grows longer and longer.

Those on the waiting list can be waiting for many years, often facing homelessness and forced to resort to shelters and unsafe neighborhoods. I ask that you provide for the least fortunate people for whom the current system is not working; families that cannot get into housing programs because the need far exceeds supply.

I urge you to vote in favor of this bill and continue to support the ones who need it the most.
Thank you.