



**HB518 HD2 Relating to Housing:** Appropriates funds for state rent supplement program for homeless who are ready to rent permanent housing.

- ↓ COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES: Senator Chun Oakland, Chair; Senator Green M.D., Vice Chair
- ↓ Saturday, Mar. 9, 2013; 3:00 p.m. Conference Room 229

## HAWAII SUBSTANCE ABUSE COALITION Supports HB518.

*Good morning Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Dr. Green and Distinguished Committee Members. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide hui of more than twenty non-profit treatment and prevention agencies.*

For those homeless who are actively working to improve their situation, they need a temporary helping hand to make it out of homelessness into permanent housing. Given our high market rents, a shallow rent subsidy is essential to their success.

We recommend that the program be based on motivation and potential. Other benefits may help a family reach a state of readiness and then a rent supplement would be the best investment at this juncture. Regardless of whether a family receives other benefits or not, the rent supplement would be built upon upon on-the-job training, developing helpful life skills, education to manage their finances, and prioritize paying rent. This approach would motivate people to strive harder to change their life situation.



Families who are ready and motivated are the best investment. The alternative can be huge costs to society.

The alternative is living in homeless situations that adversely impact health, morale, family cohesiveness, and legal issues. Often discouraged, homeless can deteriorate into depression, diabetes, drug addiction and even criminality, all of which are huge costs to society in terms of emergent care and Judiciary action.

Given the extreme shortage of affordable housing for many low income or out-of-work families, rent supplements will ensure that families who are ready to transition out of homelessness can now move into homes - with improved skills towards self-sufficiency.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony.