

Community Alliance for Mental Health

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To: The Hawai'i State House of Representatives Committees on Finance
Re: HB 518 HD1

To: The Honorable Representative Luke and the members of the committee.

Aloha,

The Community Alliance for Mental Health along with United Self Help strongly supports HB 518 HD1. The State Rent Supplement program is a crucial support in the battle against homelessness.

When a person becomes homeless, whether because they lost their job, suffer from mental illness, or substance abuse, the process of recovery is a long process. It is not just getting retrained for a new job, finding a mental health program, or the kicking of an addiction.

That is only the beginning. To really rejoin the community one must find a place to live. If you are living on General Assistance or perhaps at the lowest level of S.S.I. (about \$770 a month,) the transition to independent living can be daunting.

It's not just the rent. You all have moved in your lives. It's the first month's rent, the last month's rent, the security deposit, the utilities, and enough to eat for that month. When a person is just getting out of homelessness the odds that they are getting, or better yet have gotten a job that allows for saving up that amount of money are slim.

That is what the Rent Supplement Program is for, the transition from homelessness back to working citizen, or stable supported housing if they are a member of the aged, blind, and disabled community.

When you ask the public what problems our State faces homelessness is always in the top ten, usually in the top five problems listed. If we want to get people off the streets and back to work or into supported housing then the Rent Supplement Program is a must.

Mahalo,

Robert Scott Wall
Vice -President