



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

February 14, 2013

MEMORANDUM

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

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 519 – RELATING TO HOUSING**

Hearing: Thursday, February 14, 2013; 3:30 p.m.
Conference Room 308, State Capitol

PURPOSE: H.B. 519 appropriates \$1,000,000 or so much as may be necessary in fiscal year 2013-14 to the Department of Human Services to continue to administer Housing First programs for chronically homeless individuals in the State.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services appreciates the overall intent of this bill. The Department asks that the Legislature support the Department's priorities as requested in the Executive Budget submitted by Governor Abercrombie which contains a request for \$1,500,000 for continuation of the Housing First Program, and expansion beyond urban Honolulu to other areas of Oahu and to the Neighbor Islands.

The Housing First program, as administered by the Department, 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.

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

**Board of Directors**

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Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
 Supporting HB 519 Relating to Housing
 House Committee on Finance
 Hearing Scheduled for Thursday, February 14, 2013, 3:30 PM, Room 308

Thank you for an opportunity to testify in strong favor of House Bill 519, which would appropriate funds for the Department of Human Services to continue administering housing first programs for chronically homeless individuals in Hawai'i. Providing people who have experienced chronic homelessness with stable and decent housing is crucial to ending the homelessness crisis we are experiencing.

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. 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.

Housing first, also known as "rapid re-housing," has been adopted in many parts of the country as a major tactic to end chronic homelessness by helping individuals secure and retain permanent housing. It is an evidence-based practice that reduces chronic homelessness, improves the health and well-being of formerly homeless individuals, and lowers costs. The housing first model stabilizes individuals' housing situation and provides comprehensive support services so that participants can address the other issues they face, such as mental illness, substance abuse, and chronic health conditions.

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness has endorsed housing first as a "best practice" that has shown great success in reducing chronic homelessness and improving outcomes for participants. For example, Utah's statewide implementation of a housing first program has resulted in an incredible 72 percent decrease in the number of chronically homeless individuals since 2005. Homelessness has been reduced enough that they have actually closed emergency shelters. Communities throughout the nation have recognized similar results.

Those placed in housing show improved mental and physical health, decreases in substance use, and overall quality of life. Visits to emergency rooms, hospitalizations, outpatient treatment, detox services, incarceration, and shelter utilization are dramatically reduced when chronically homeless individuals are placed in housing. Not only does housing first result in positive outcomes for participants, but it also saves the state significant amounts of money. By lowering the usage of these services, states and municipalities have saved thousands or tens of thousands of dollars per individual, even when the cost of permanent housing and services is factored in. Over time, this adds up to millions of dollars. Placement in housing can also help individuals take full advantage of benefits to which they are entitled, increasing their financial stability.

In its position as an advocate for people experiencing homelessness, LEJ has researched affordable housing and how to address the homelessness crisis here in Hawai'i. Housing first has been extensively studied and has shown the type of results we desperately need in Hawai'i. An investment in housing first not only saves money, but most importantly, it dramatically increases the health and well-being of individuals who have experienced homelessness for far too long.



CATHOLIC CHARITIES HAWAII

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 519: RELATING TO HOUSING

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

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

Hearing: Thursday, 2/14,13; 3:30 PM; CR 308

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

Thank you for the opportunity to **strongly support** HB 519, which appropriates funds to continue the implementation of the Housing First model in Hawaii. I am Betty Lou Larson, Legislative Liaison at Catholic Charities Hawaii.

The Housing First program has proven its success in many states as a way to more effectively address the chronically homeless. These homeless are often the most visible homeless, living in our neighborhoods, doorways, under bridges, etc. These persons experience homelessness over a long period of time and incur very significant public costs. Housing First assists them to gain permanent housing and then provides the services needed to keep them in housing and successfully transition off the streets.

In 2012, 100 medically vulnerable unsheltered homeless individuals were identified during the 100K Homes Campaign on Oahu. Homeless providers are currently working collaborative and aggressively to house these targeted vulnerable individuals. However, housing is only the first step – they will need ongoing services to ensure that they are able to address their health and social needs.

The Housing First program can provide a means through which many of these 100 medically vulnerable unsheltered homeless individuals can receive the services they need. The benefit to these individuals is an improvement to their quality, and quantity, of life. The benefit to our community is reduced cost since the latest information on Partners In Care's "What is the Cost of Homelessness?" states:

- 38% of all public costs for those who are unsheltered are health care costs.
- The average public cost for an unsheltered homeless person is \$2,897 per month vs. the average public cost for a resident in supportive housing is \$605 per month. Public costs can be decreased by 79% by providing supportive housing with services.

We also support the Governor's budget which increases the funding to \$1.5 million for the Housing First program. This increase would enable Housing First to expand beyond urban Honolulu to other areas, including the Neighbor Islands.

We urge your support to continue and expand Housing First to reduce the public costs and to move the most vulnerable off our streets. Thank you.



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

• www.CatholicCharitiesHawaii.org





PARTNERS IN CARE

Oahu's Coalition of Homeless Providers

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 519: RELATING TO HOUSING

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

FROM: Gladys L. Peraro, Advocacy Committee Co-Chair, Partners In Care (PIC)

Hearing: Monday, 2/14/13; 3:30 P.M.; CR 308

Chair Luke, Vice Chairs Nishimoto and Johanson, and Members, Committees on Finance:

Thank you on behalf of Partners In Care (PIC), for the opportunity to provide testimony in support HB 519, which appropriates funds to continue the implementation of the Housing First model in Hawaii. I am Gladys L. Peraro, Advocacy Committee Co-Chair for Partners In Care, the coalition care providers focused on the needs of homeless persons and strategies to end homelessness.

The Housing First model of intervention has proven successful in many states as a way to more effectively address the chronically homeless population, who are often the most visible and most medically fragile homeless, living in our neighborhoods, doorways, under bridges, and other areas not meant for habitation. These individuals experience homelessness over a long period of time and incur very significant public costs. Housing First works to successfully transition this fragile population off the streets and into permanent housing, where they also receive vital services to keep them stably housed.

In 2012, 100 medically vulnerable unsheltered homeless individuals were identified during the 100,000 Homes Campaign on Oahu. Homeless providers are currently working collaborative and aggressively to house the vulnerable individuals identified during the campaign period. Housing First, however, is only the first step in the process – the chronically homeless population will need ongoing services to ensure that their health and social needs are addressed.

The Housing First model can provide a means through which many of these 100 chronically homeless and medically vulnerable unsheltered individuals can receive the services they so desperately need. The benefit to these individuals is an improvement to their quality, and quantity, of life. The benefit to our community is reduced cost since the latest information on Partners In Care's "What is the Cost of Homelessness?" states:

- 38% of all public costs for those who are unsheltered are health care costs.
- The average public cost for an unsheltered homeless person is \$2,897 per month vs. the average public cost for a resident in supportive housing is \$605 per month. Public costs can be decreased by 79% by providing supportive housing with services.
- The average life expectancy for this fragile population is 25 years less than the average individuals.

Partners In Care also support the Governor's budget which increases the funding to \$1.5 million for the Housing First program. This increase would enable Housing First to expand beyond urban Honolulu to other areas, including the Neighbor Islands.

We respectfully urge your support to continue and expand Housing First to reduce the public costs and to move the most vulnerable off our streets into permanent housing. Thank you.

Partners In Care, c/o Aloha United Way, 200 N. Vineyard Blvd. Suite 700
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817
