

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



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HAKIM OUANSAFI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
1002 NORTH SCHOOL STREET
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

BARBARA E. ARASHIRO
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Statement of
Hakim Ouansafi
Hawaii Public Housing Authority
Before the

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

March 11, 2014 1:15 P.M.
Room 016, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of

House Bill 1539, House Draft 1
Relating to the Hawaii Public Housing Authority's Administration of the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Honorable Chair Chun Oakland and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide you with comments regarding House Bill (H.B.) 1539, House Draft 1 (H.D. 1), relating to the Hawaii Public Housing Authority's administration of the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program.

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) strongly supports the enactment of this measure, which would only allow original household members to retain a federal Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and prevent the "inheriting" of HCVs to family and friends.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program allows people to live outside of public housing, in private market rentals, and does not have an expiration date. Currently, it is permissible for original members of the household to add more people to the existing household.

Therefore, when the original household members leave the Housing Choice Voucher Program, the new people that were subsequently added to the household, end up "inheriting" the voucher. This practice circumvents the waitlist process and adds to the slow movement on the waitlist. Needy families on the waitlist are then forced to wait that much longer for their chance at housing assistance.

The "inheriting" of HCVs is not a problem that is unique to Hawaii. Agencies that administer the HCV program across the nation are experiencing this situation. The HPHA investigated and found that some people have had the voucher for over 3 decades, and there are over 50 known cases of "inheriting" of HCVs at the HPHA.

The HPHA appreciates the opportunity to provide the Senate Committee on Human Services with the agency's position regarding H.B. 1539, HD1. We respectfully request the Committee to pass this measure favorably, and we thank you very much for your dedicated support.