

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



Testimony of
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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

IN REPLY REFER TO:

January 30, 2014
2:00 pm
State Capitol, Room 325

H.B. 1859
RELATING TO SIDEWALKS

House Committee on Judiciary

The Department of Transportation **supports** House Bill 1859 to remove obstructions on sidewalks. This will assist in deterring and removing person(s) who knowingly block the use of sidewalks. House Bill 1859 will provide a safer pedestrian environment in keeping sidewalks clear of unnecessary and/or potentially intimidating obstructions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



January 29, 2014

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair
Rep. Sharon Har, Vice Chair
Rep. Della Au Belatti
Rep. Mark M. Nakashima
Rep. Tom Brower
Rep. Clift Tsuji
Rep. Richard Creagan
Rep. Jessica Wooley
Rep. Ken Ito
Rep. Bob McDermott
Rep. Derek S.K. Kawakami
Rep. Cynthia Thielen
Rep. Chris Lee

NOTICE OF HEARING

DATE: Thursday, January 30, 2014

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

PLACE: Conference Room 325, State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

**RE: TESTIMONY IN STRONG OPPOSITION TO HB1859
RELATING TO SIDEWALKS**

Aloha, Committee on Judiciary:

While we support the intent to maintain public safety, the Pacific Alliance to Stop Slavery is in strong opposition to HB1859 and kindly urge you to defer this unnecessary measure seeking to further criminalize and dehumanize the houseless through its application. There is no need to amend current law in this way.

The application of laws that disproportionately criminalize the houseless for finding respite on the sidewalk, because everywhere else has been outlawed, has resulted in many abuses of innocent people by law enforcement and city officials. These abuses include: verbal harassment, physical assault, and the unconstitutional seizure of property belonging to houseless persons and families. Though this bill may not intentionally seek to allow for constitutional violations of this nature, its application will lead and has already resulted in such with current laws similar to this which have already taken effect.

These measures seeking to directly or indirectly criminalize the houseless do not succeed in increasing public safety and only succeed in wasting taxpayer dollars and clogging up our already overloaded criminal justice system. We must enact measures that have been proven to work and we must support

current legislation seeking to provide affordable housing and funding for services. Let's now focus on the empirical argument for the fiscal irresponsibility of HB1660.

I present examples that have been implemented in other U.S. municipalities and provide a statistical picture of the unsheltered houseless population on O'ahu.

Houselessness in other U.S. municipalities

Costly measures to incarcerate and fine houseless individuals:

- **Issuing citations to houseless persons is expensive.** San Francisco spent \$9.8 million between 2004 and 2008 on over 56,000 "quality of life" citations, like the one proposed in Bill 6.
- **Incarcerating houseless people costs twice as much as providing them permanent housing.** In Cleveland, incarceration costs \$65 per day, versus \$30 per day for shelter. Seattle's "Housing First" program indicated that provided permanent housing for houseless people was 53% less expensive than having them live on the street. This marginal cost saving increased over time as program participants became financially stable and independent.
- **Issuing citations does not prevent houselessness.** Minneapolis spent an estimated \$2.6 million between 1994 and 2005 issuing citations and incarcerating 33 chronically houseless individuals, with minimal desired results.
- **It may in fact make people more likely to remain houseless.** Indianapolis spends \$3 to \$7 million annually on its population of 500 houseless individuals (similar in size to Honolulu's unsheltered houseless population estimate of 505 in 2013). The Indianapolis study notably linked contact with law enforcement with longer periods of houselessness and higher costs associated with healthcare.

Measures that have succeeded in other municipalities:

- **Seattle's** programs to place the chronically houseless into permanent housing cost \$1.1 annually and saved a total of \$2.5 million per year (\$2,400 per person), which was previously spent on medical expenses, bookings, and shelter.
- **Portland's** "A Key not a Card" initiative placed 936 houseless people into permanent housing between 2005 and 2009 at a cost of \$1.9 million per year.
- A **Palo Alto, Calif.** program created kits that other municipalities could purchase to establish their own employment and housing support services for houseless individuals. **Daytona Beach, Fla.** has recently implemented its kit with success.



Houseless population on O'ahu

Between 2012 and 2013, the houseless population in Honolulu County increased 4.7%, more than any other county in Hawai'i. Among O'ahu's houseless, the portion that live unsheltered is growing rapidly, by a margin of 11% since 2012 and 23% since 2009. The rate of unsheltered families with children also rose 5% since 2012.

This issue of "sidewalks" begs a compassionate response since its real target is the increase in houseless persons. It behooves this committee to defer HB1859 in consideration of the several measures on Housing and the Homeless currently moving through the legislative process that more appropriately and effectively address this concern.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Xian
Executive Director