

SB2534

Measure Title: RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS.

Report Title: Homeless; Hale Kokua Program; Appropriation (\$)

Description: Establishes the Hale Kokua Program, within the Department of Human Services to incentivize homeowners statewide to set aside dwelling units for rental by families or individuals classified as employed but homeless. Appropriates funds.

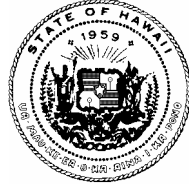
Companion:

Package: Housing and Homeless Legislative Package

Current Referral: HMS, WAM

Introducer(s): CHUN OAKLAND, Baker, Wakai

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
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January 25, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Patricia McManaman, Director

SUBJECT: **S.B. 2534 – RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

Hearing: Saturday, January 25, 2014; 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 229; State Capitol

PURPOSE: S.B. 2534 proposes to establish a Hale Kokua program within the Department of Human Services. The proposed service would provide incentives and assistance to homeowners throughout the State who set aside existing dwelling units for rental for a period of five years by families or individuals classified as employed but homeless.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services appreciates the intent of this bill to provide affordable housing for homeless individuals and families. However, we do not support the Hale Kokua program as a means to achieve this goal.

The scope and requirements of this program to be implemented statewide would make oversight of this program onerous even if it were contracted to a vendor. The oversight required includes background checks, eligibility, screening and monitoring of work status, payment status, housing placement (and related liability to the State), disbursement of rental subsidies, working with the counties to develop and propose uniform incentives for property owners, and working with counties to enact real property tax rate waivers or reductions as incentives to property owners.

Even if the program were implemented by a vendor, the Homeless Programs Office would be responsible for procurement, contracting, and monitoring. To be able to

do all of this additional work, including the financial monitoring of the various transactions, the projected staffing resources needed would be:

- 1) a program administrator
- 2) 6 program specialists
- 3) an attorney or advocate to work with the counties on zoning and real property exemption issues;
- 4) 2 forensic accountants to monitor spending on the individual and aggregate basis

The current requirements of the program are beyond the Homeless Programs Office's ability to administer program without adequate staffing, funding, and administrative and program supports.

Homeless service agencies are already working with private landlords and property management companies to establish relationships that encourage and promote housing opportunities for the homeless (and formerly homeless). Statewide efforts to address homelessness have become more focused on housing individuals and families. Agencies are educating landlords about the client base. Agency staff are in essence housing liaisons that help landlords be assured that the tenant remains stable and upholds terms of the rental agreements. These supports, which may come in a continuum of intensity, are necessary to get landlords to be open to renting to our homeless clients. When positive relationships between landlords and agencies are established and nurtured through consistent follow up, tenants are more stable and landlords grow more willing to rent their units to our client base.

The system would certainly benefit from greater participation by more landlords and more property management firms, but establishment of a new program with additional burdens for eligibility, five year commitments, and monitoring of additional incentives does not appear feasible.

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

TESTIMONY ON SB 2542 RELATING TO THE DISPOSITION OF THE CONVEYANCE TAX COLLECTIONS TO THE RENTAL HOUSING TRUST FUND, SB 2267 RELATING TO HOUSING, SB 2442 RELATING TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING, SB 2266 RELATING TO HOUSING, SB 2265 RELATING TO HOUSING, SB 2545 RELATING TO UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S SAVING ACCOUNTS, SB 2544 RELATING TO THE HAWAII PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY'S ADMINISTRATION OF THE FEDERAL HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM, SB 2534 RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS, SB 2337 RELATING TO LOW-INCOME HOUSING, SB 2395 RELATING TO HOMELESS, AND SB 2286 RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

January 25, 2014

10:00 AM

Conference Rm. 229

Aloha Chair Chun Oakland, Vice-Chair Green, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, **my name is Stephen Morse. I am the Executive Director of Blueprint for Change (BFC) and am here today to support Senate Bills 2542, 2267, 2442, 2266, 2265, 2545, 2544, 2534, 2337, 2395, and 2286, all of which are part of the Housing and Homeless Legislative Package.**

Members, for the record, BFC is the fiscal, technical, and administrative support entity for five Neighborhood Place centers statewide that provide support and strengthening services to families at risk of child abuse and neglect under a POS contract with the Department of Human Services. Our Neighborhood Place programs are unique among CAN prevention programs for two reasons: (1) they are community-based and are located in communities where families are at high risk of child abuse and neglect; and (2) they are the only programs where children and families at risk of child abuse and neglect can get services without a referral or appointment and by simply knocking on the door.

We find that one of the biggest risk factors for child neglect in the families we serve is that they are homeless, homeless-at-risk, or living in unstable, overcrowded living conditions. In many cases, these families are also mired in other socioeconomic problems, such as unemployment and low incomes, substance abuse, and chronic health problems, but studies show that the key to helping these families break the cycle of poverty starts with providing them stable housing. Without stable housing, these families live transient lifestyles that make it hard for them to focus on problem-solving. It also makes it extremely difficult for prevention/diversion programs such as our Neighborhood Places to help provide the sustained, support services these families need to break the cycle, because they are always on the move.

If we are going to break the cycle and prevent the generational neglect of children within these families, we need to support housing programs and the development of low-income and affordable housing such as those proposed in the Senate Bills that are before this Committee today.

Aloha and Mahalo for allowing us the opportunity to testify this afternoon.