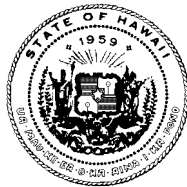




HB 734 HD1

Measure Title:	RELATING TO HOUSING.
Report Title:	Housing First Voucher Program; Homelessness (\$)
Description:	Establishes the housing first voucher program within the Department of Human Services. Appropriates general funds to the Housing First Special Fund to implement the program. (HB734 HD1)
Companion:	
Package:	None
Current Referral:	HSH, WAM
Introducer(s):	HASHEM



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

March 13, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing

FROM: Rachael Wong, DrPH, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 734 HD1 – RELATING TO HOUSING**

Hearing: Thursday, March 17, 2015; 1:20 p.m.
Conference Room 016; State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purpose of H.B. 734 HD1 is to amend Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to create the Housing First voucher program, and to appropriate unspecified funds for said program. The measure proposes that a per cent of moneys deposited into the housing first special fund be used for the housing first voucher program.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services appreciates the intent of this measure as it would continue to fund the State's Housing First program (HF). However, the DHS requests the Legislature support the Department's priorities in the Executive Budget which contains a request for \$2,000,000 for the continuation of the HF.

Per section 346-378(b), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), the Legislature set out the principles of the current HF that directs the DHS' focus of providing HF and support services to the chronically homeless. This special population most often requires supportive services to obtain housing, apply for available public benefits, and to engage in health, mental health and/or

substance abuse programs. Based on the plain language of the bill as proposed, the Department offers the following comments about the proposal to re-establish the HF as a “voucher” program.

1. The Department’s current HF essentially operates as a voucher program. This means that the State’s HF contractor receives referrals of the chronically homeless through Hale O’ Malama, the coordinated entry to our homeless resource system. All homeless encountered in the community are asked to undergo an initial screening via the Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization and Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). If the individual’s acuity (needs) reach the level of requiring permanent supportive housing (HF), that individual is matched with the appropriate level of care. For example, if served through the State’s HF, the client would be moved into a housing unit as quickly as possible, and provided with intensive case management by the contractor to promote compliance with terms of a lease. Leasing of the rental unit may be accomplished via a direct lease between landlord and client, or by the contractor establishing a “master lease” and having the client identified as the unit’s occupant. Such arrangements have been effective in optimizing rental units and expediting occupancy.

Treatment for substance abuse or mental health issues is not a pre-requisite to housing. It is important to note that many homeless are able to establish stability once they are housed, and often choose to participate in treatment at some later point in time. This has been established by this evidence based program across many implementation sites across the county.

2. The current implementation of HF provides the State and the HF contractor (and ultimately the HF clients) with the highest degree of flexibility possible in securing housing units for this specialized population. When implemented with fidelity to the evidence based model, Housing First programs are optimally scattered site housing. This

means that housing units are found across different communities and different settings (e.g. single unit in one location, multiple units in another building, etc). The scattered site model alleviates some of the “not in my backyard” or NIMBY-ism that frequently occurs. Although some Housing First programs do operate with “project based” housing, that is, multiple housing units in the same complex, or one building dedicated to housing many HF clients, this arrangement may not be optimal. The existing program structure provides our changing system with the flexibility needed at this time and into the future.

3. Feedback received from housing placement agencies contracted with the State indicates that landlords have preconceived bias against accepting “vouchers” or similar subsidized rent payments. Some landlords are reluctant to work with any form of voucher, including Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers. If the HF is crafted solely as a “voucher” program, housing inventory may become more limited for our clients.

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



HPCOA

HAWAII PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION

Senate Committee on Human Services and Housing

The Hon. Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair

The Hon. Josh Green, Vice-Chair

Testimony in Support of House Bill 734 HD 1

Relating to Housing

Submitted by Nani Medeiros, Public Affairs and Policy Director

March 17, 2015, 1:20 pm, Room 016

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA), which represents the federally qualified community health centers in Hawaii, supports House Bill 734, establishing the housing first voucher program.

The HPCA is a staunch believer in the social determinants of health, those economic and social conditions that influence an individual and a community's health status. These conditions serve as risk factors endemic to a person's living and working environment, rather than their behavioral or genetic histories. Factors such as income, education, access to recreation and healthy foods, housing, and employment, can and do have measurable impacts on a person and a community, both in health and financial outcomes.

Housing is health. Hawaii's community health centers provided health care and other services to 12,459 unique patients experiencing homelessness in 2013. Housing, the lack of affordable housing, and homelessness are all social determinants of health: they are circumstances that influence the health of individuals and the health of communities, more so than an individual's genetic code.

House Bill 734 speaks to one of these major determinants by seeking to creating viable housing opportunities for homeless individuals here in Hawaii. For that reason, we strongly support this measure and thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Chamber of Commerce HAWAII
The Voice of Business

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Human Services and Housing
Tuesday, March 17, 2015 at 1:20 P.M.
Conference Room 016, State Capitol**

RE: HOUSE BILL 734 HD1 RELATING TO HOUSING

Chair Chun Oakland, Vice Chair Green, and Members of the Committee:

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii (“The Chamber”) **supports** H.B. 734 HD1, which would establish the housing first voucher program within the Department of Human Services and appropriate general funds to the Housing First Special Fund to implement the program.

The Chamber is Hawaii’s leading statewide business advocacy organization, representing about 1,000 businesses. Approximately 80% of our members are small businesses with less than 20 employees. As the “Voice of Business” in Hawaii, the organization works on behalf of members and the entire business community to improve the state’s economic climate and to foster positive action on issues of common concern.

The goal of H.B. 734 HD1 appears to provide a revenue source to attract private developers to build units chronically homeless individuals serviced through the Housing First program. Providing a predictable source of funding will attract private developers to provide the additional units for the program.

We appreciate the opportunity to express our support for H.B. 734 HD1.



THE QUEEN'S HEALTH SYSTEMS

To: Chair Suzanne Chun Oakland
Vice Chair Josh Green
Senate Committee on Human Services and Housing

From: Paula Yoshioka
Senior Vice President
The Queen's Health Systems

Re: HB 734, Relating to Housing
Hearing—March 17, 2015

The Queen's Health Systems would like to express support for efforts to bolster housing first programs in Hawaii.

We have partnered with a number of social service providers through the Hawaii Pathways Project, which utilizes a "housing first" model to help find permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals who have substance abuse issues. Many of those individuals also struggle with mental illness. We believe this type of project helps to address the root causes of high utilization of emergency departments.

While there are a number of cases we could highlight, one stands out in particular. We had one individual who had over 100 emergency department visits in 2014. This individual was admitted numerous times for chronic conditions. He was enrolled in the program in late November of last year and was placed into a foster home. Between the first week of December and the writing of this testimony, that individual has not visited our emergency department.

We would ask for your support of housing first programs in order to build on these types of successes. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

The mission of The Queen's Health Systems is to fulfill the intent of Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV to provide in perpetuity quality health care services to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians and all of the people of Hawai'i.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HSH Testimony](#)
Cc: darakawa@lurf.org
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB734 on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM
Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2015 8:42:19 PM

HB734

Submitted on: 3/11/2015

Testimony for HSH on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
David Z. Arakawa	Individual	Support	No

Comments: The Land Use Research Foundation of Hawaii SUPPORTS the intent of HB 734 RELATING TO HOUSING, which establishes the Housing first Voucher Program within the Department of Human Services. Appropriates general funds to the Housing First Special Fund to implement the program. (HB734 HD1)

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PROTECTING HAWAII'S OHANA, CHILDREN, UNDER SERVED, ELDERLY AND DISABLED

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TO: Senator Suzanne Chun Oakland, Chair
Senator Josh Green, Vice Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Human Services & Housing

FROM: Scott Morishige, MSW
Executive Director, PHOCUSED

HEARING: **Tuesday, March 17, 2015 at 1:20 p.m. in Conf. Rm. 016**

Testimony Supporting the Intent of HB734 HD1, Relating to Housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **supporting the intent** of HB734 HD1, which would establish a housing first voucher program within the Department of Human Services. PHOCUSED is a nonprofit membership and advocacy organization that works together with community stakeholders to impact program and policy change for the most vulnerable in our community, including homeless individuals and families.

Hawaii has the 2nd highest rate of homelessness in the nation, and it is critical that we employ all of the tools in our tool box to address this need. Housing First is an evidence-based best practice that has proven effective in a number of different communities across our country. By placing the most vulnerable homeless individuals into permanent housing as quickly as possible, Housing First not only addresses a homeless person's immediate housing needs, but also greatly reduces the public cost of homelessness. Currently, the State funds a Housing First program on Oahu, and there is a need to expand this program statewide – as homelessness is not an Oahu-specific issue.

While we support the intent of this bill and strongly believe Housing First is an effective intervention, we are unsure how the new Housing First voucher program would be different from the current Housing First services contracted to nonprofit providers by the Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS currently contracts the U.S. Veteran's Initiative ("U.S. Vets") who issues vouchers to clients and/or landlords to secure rental units in the private market, similar to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher system.

Testimony in support of this bill from the Building Industry Association and the Chamber of Commerce indicate the bill's purpose is to *"create a revenue source to attract private developers to build units for chronically homeless individuals serviced through the Housing First program."* It is unclear from a plain reading of this bill's language, whether it would achieve this intended result. If this bill proceeds forward, we respectfully suggest that the language of the bill be clarified to differentiate whether its purpose is to issue housing choice vouchers, or to incentivize housing development. PHOCUSED supports any effort to develop new housing inventory, but we are unclear whether this bill achieves this purpose.

Once again, PHOCUSED supports the intent of this bill, and strongly believes that Housing First is an effective intervention to address homelessness. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact PHOCUSED at 521-7462 or by e-mail at admin@phocused-hawaii.org.

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HSH Testimony](#)
Cc: dkk@hawaiiantel.net
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB734 on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2015 2:57:27 PM

HB734

Submitted on: 3/15/2015

Testimony for HSH on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Deborah Kimball	Individual	Support	No

Comments: There is no doubt of the desperate need for housing--first among services. As a Section 8 project tenant I can attest to this. Housing is a basic human need, along with food & clothing, which are quite freely donated. But who can donate housing? Mahalo for supporting this bill.

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HSH Testimony](#)
Cc: jamesjtz@aol.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB734 on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM*
Date: Sunday, March 15, 2015 10:51:38 PM

HB734

Submitted on: 3/15/2015

Testimony for HSH on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
James Gauer	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HSH Testimony](#)
Cc: babyjean@hotmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB734 on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM
Date: Saturday, March 14, 2015 8:33:07 PM

HB734

Submitted on: 3/14/2015

Testimony for HSH on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ronnie Perry	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I strongly support this bill. It is a fact that the best way to get someone out of homelessness is very simple: House them with no string attached. Housing First has worked and it is the best and compassionate way to deal with our lack of affordable housing. It saves the state money and prevents suffering. Just give people what they need and let them live their lives the way they see fit. This is an excellent program and has proven to work in states where its implemented such as in Utah. Please support and pass this bill. The current tactics of our city is making the problem worst as the homeless are just being moved around into areas where there are no trash facilities, toilets or maintenance. Our environment is suffering as these people are being pushed to remote areas and the trash problem is growing and becoming a huge problem on Oahu. People need homes. It is a simple problem to fix. Support Housing First! mahalo Ronnie Perry

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
To: [HSH Testimony](#)
Cc: anthony_orozco@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB734 on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM
Date: Thursday, March 12, 2015 10:54:42 AM

HB734

Submitted on: 3/12/2015

Testimony for HSH on Mar 17, 2015 13:20PM in Conference Room 016

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Anthony Orozco	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments: Wow. Now taxpayers can pay for apartments for crack head bums to get high in all day instead of cleaning up and getting a job.

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