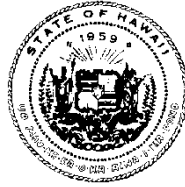


DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



HAKIM OUANSAFI
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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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Statement of
Hakim Ouansafi
Hawaii Public Housing Authority
Before the

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

February 2, 2015 8:30 A.M.
Room 329, Hawaii State Capitol

In consideration of

House Bill 932

Relating to the Hawaii Public Housing Authority

Honorable Chair Hashem and Members of the House Committee on Housing, thank you for the opportunity to provide you with comments regarding House Bill (H.B.) 932, relating to the Hawaii Public Housing Authority.

The Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) **strongly supports** the enactment of this Administrative measure, which would extend the sunset date of Act 159 Session Laws of Hawaii 2012 for another 3 years and continue to temporarily exempt from civil service, persons hired or contracted to perform repair or maintenance work on the HPHA's vacant public housing units.

The HPHA's mission is to promote adequate and affordable housing, economic opportunity and a suitable living environment free from discrimination through its public housing and rental assistance programs. The HPHA serves the State's most vulnerable populations, including those earning less than thirty percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), the disabled and the elderly.

Before the passage of Act 159 Session Laws of Hawaii 2012, the HPHA took an average of triple digit days to address the turnaround time of vacant units. With the passage of Act 159, the HPHA has been able to hire 26 exempt and professionally licensed staff members that have completely renovated 122 vacant units and performed 217 repairs to make available a total of 339 vacant units to needy families, while recently raising the HPHA's statewide occupancy rate to approximately 98 percent.

The 26 exempt staff members, termed the "Special Teams" unit has provided on the job

training for unlicensed workers, and have provided kitchen and bath renovations, plumbing repairs, roof patching, asbestos removal, replaced windows, installed security doors, and repaired street lights. The efforts of the Special Teams unit has reduced vacant unit turnaround time from triple digit days to 7 days, of which some units were vacant since 2008.

The HPHA respectfully requests to continue the civil service exempt hiring of its Special Teams unit members for three additional years to continue with the repair, maintenance, or capital improvement project work on vacant housing units. The Special Teams unit is needed to maintain the same rate of performance and unit turnaround time to ensure the HPHA's delivery of low-income public housing in a timely and efficient manner as the agency aggressively attempts to increase its low-income rental housing stock in redeveloping its existing properties to combat the affordable housing crisis facing Hawaii. Furthermore, the federal subsidy that the agency receives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is based on occupied units and this team plays a vital role in securing federal funds as well as improving our scores.

The HPHA appreciates the opportunity to provide the House Committee on Housing with the agency's position regarding H.B. 932. We respectfully request the Committee to pass this measure favorably, and we thank you very much for your dedicated support.