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GOVERNOR

February 9, 2016

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

The Honorable Breene Harimoto, Chair  
Senate Committee on Housing

**FROM:** Scott Morishige, MSW, Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness

**SUBJECT: SB 2559 – RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

Hearing: Tuesday, February 09, 2016, 1:20 p.m.  
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

**POSITION:** The Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness appreciates the intent of this measure, as it addresses key components of the state's efforts to address homelessness. The Coordinator defers to the Department of Human Services (DHS) in regards to issues relating to the administration and oversight of homeless programs, including shelter. While the Coordinator establishes and coordinates state policy to address homelessness, the DHS Homeless Programs Office (HPO) is responsible for the administration and implementation of homeless programs.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the bill is to establish minimum requirements for emergency shelters, prohibit an emergency shelter from establishing or enforcing a maximum period of stay for homeless families or individuals, require homeless shelter stipends to be paid for achievement of performance measures, repeal the automatic adjustment of homeless shelter stipend amounts, revise existing provisions on the establishment and collection of shelter and service payments from homeless families and individuals, and requires homeless service provider agencies to submit a financial audit to DHS at least annually. The bill would also

establish 2.0 FTE positions to assist in the procurement and monitoring of homeless shelter contracts, and would appropriate an unspecified amount of funds to DHS.

The Coordinator notes that the 2015 Point in Time (PIT) count estimated that there are 7,620 homeless individuals statewide on any given night, including an estimated 3,777 (49.5%) who are sheltered. However, according to the 2015 Housing Inventory Count (HIC) issued by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), there are a total of 4,363 shelter beds statewide. Based upon 2015 PIT and HIC estimates, there may be as many as 586 shelter beds that are empty on a given night, despite the fact that the number of unsheltered homeless individuals statewide has increased by 23% between 2014 and 2015.

According to feedback from homeless service providers and individuals experiencing homelessness, the lack of privacy and lack of amenities (i.e. showers or lockers, etc.) are sometimes disincentives for shelter entry. Other disincentives identified by homeless individuals include shelter fees, and the inability of shelters to accept pets. The Coordinator notes that HPO regularly monitors shelter performance across all contracted providers, and is in the process of preparing a new Request for Proposals (RFP) for shelter services, which is expected to be released later this spring. The RFP is intended to encourage greater efficiency throughout the shelter system, and is expected to result in the maximization of shelter spaces to better serve Hawaii's growing number of unsheltered individuals and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.