



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
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DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

February 7, 2018

TO: The Honorable Representative John M. Mizuno, Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services

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

SUBJECT: HB 2694 – RELATING TO FEES

Hearing: Wednesday, February 7, 2018, 10:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

POSITION: The Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness appreciates the intent of this measure, and offers comments. The Coordinator defers to the Department of Health (DOH).

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to require DOH to waive all fees for the issuance of certified copies of birth certificates for any individual who is homeless, provided the individual's homeless status is corroborated by a verification letter issued by a homeless service provider.

Homelessness remains one of the most pressing challenges facing Hawaii, and the State has adopted a comprehensive framework to address homelessness that focuses on three primary leverage points – affordable housing, health and human services, and public safety. In particular, the State has worked together with the Legislature to increase funding for homeless outreach and civil legal services to address the needs of unsheltered homeless individuals. More specifically, DHS contracts civil legal service providers to assist homeless individuals with obtaining government identification or vital records, such as a birth certificate or social security card. The Coordinator notes that the Governor's Supplemental Budget request includes \$1.75 million for homeless outreach and civil legal services, and respectfully requests the Legislature's support of this request.

The Coordinator further notes that the DOH vital records office relies upon fee revenue to support the ongoing operations and administration of that office, including recent upgrades to online ordering and tracking. Many of the requests to assist with obtaining a birth certificate or other vital records are from homeless individuals that relocated to Hawaii from another jurisdiction. In addition, many individuals seeking assistance with obtaining documents are in need of a number of different documents – many of which require a separate fee to obtain – and not solely seeking assistance with obtaining a birth certificate.

Accordingly, if this measure moves forward, the Coordinator suggests amending the measure to include an appropriation for funding to cover the cost of obtaining a birth certificate and other vital records for a homeless individual regardless of the jurisdiction. A working group established by Act 243, Session Laws of Hawaii 2015, to research the issue of documentation for homeless individuals made a similar recommendation. A link to the recommendations of the working group can be found online here:

<http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Act-243-2015-Working-Group-Interim-Report.pdf>. An appropriation for this purpose would complement existing services for homeless outreach and civil legal services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

HB-2694

Submitted on: 2/6/2018 1:22:21 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/7/2018 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Heather Lusk	The CHOW Project	Support	No

Comments:

The CHOW Project strongly supports HB 2694 which will reduce barriers to people becoming housed. Hawaii has the highest rate of homelessness in the U.S. and we have many barriers to people accessing housing. While inventory and cost are two of the biggest barriers, we also believe the cost of birth certificates and other documents make it challenging for people that are homeless to become document ready. Please support this effort at reducing the barriers to homelessness.

HB-2694

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 12:40:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 2/7/2018 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Isaiah Chong		Support	No

Comments:

Aloha honorable legislators, I write you all in support of this measure and I suggest we go a bit further in the actions we take and waive the fees (or offer a discount) for the unemployed as well, and possibly those who fall in to the low income category using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, because one cannot get a job without a Social Security Card; and one cannot apply for a replacement SSC without a birth certificate. Without employment or in some individuals' cases, without a second job, it may become difficult for them to find the money to pay for the birth certificate while weighing the options of food or medicine vs paying for a birth certificate. Long term unemployment or underemployment runs a high risk of leading to homelessness.

If, representatives, we don't set the right path now, no matter how many homeless individuals we get in to housing there will be more to come. To solve this issue we must bring homeless individuals in to housing, but we must also fix the problems that may lead others to poverty and eventual homelessness. As parliamentarians you are elected to serve the greater good, you have an opportunity to do so now, please take this opportunity. Thank you.