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DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

March 13, 2018

TO: The Honorable Representative Will Espero, Chair
Senate Committee on Housing

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

SUBJECT: **HB 2744 HD1 – RELATING TO HOUSING ASSISTANCE**

Hearing: Wednesday, March 13, 2018, 2:45 p.m.
Conference Room 225, State Capitol

POSITION: The Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness supports this measure to the extent that this appropriation does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget. The Coordinator respectfully requests that the Legislature support the Governor's Supplemental Budget request which includes \$1,551,577 to the Hawaii Public Housing Authority (HPHA) for the state rent supplement program.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to appropriate funds to HPHA to provide additional rent supplement subsidies.

The Coordinator notes that HB 1900 HD1 blanks out the requested appropriation for \$1,551,577 for the state rent supplement program, and transfers \$1,069,494 from Program ID HMS 222 (HPHA - Rental Assistance Services) to Program ID 211 (Department of Human Services – Benefits, Employment & Support Services Division Cash Support for Families – Self-Sufficiency). The Coordinator further notes that the Department of Human Services (DHS) does not currently have adequate staffing, procedures, administrative rules, or a payment system to administer the state rent supplement program, and that a transfer of funds from HPHA to DHS will likely result in a disruption of services to current recipients of the state rent supplement program, which could place current recipients at immediate risk of homelessness.

For these reasons, the Coordinator prefers the language in this measure, HB 2744 HD1, which appropriates funds for the state rent supplement program to HPHA, which does have staffing, procedures, administrative rules and an adequate payment system to administer the program.

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, Hawaii is beginning to make progress in reducing the number of homeless individuals statewide. In 2017, the statewide Point in Time (PIT) count found the number of homeless people in Hawaii had decreased for the first time in eight years – a decrease of 701 people between 2016 and 2017. It is critical that the State continue to invest in programs that have proven their effectiveness in transitioning homeless individuals to longer-term housing. Accordingly, the Coordinator respectfully requests the Legislature’s support of the Governor’s Supplemental Budget request, which includes funding for Housing First, Rapid Rehousing, homeless outreach services, the Family Assessment Center, and the state rent supplement program.

Collectively, the homeless programs administered by DHS, HPHA, and other State agencies represent an array of financial resources designed to provide one-time crisis assistance, as well as medium term (3-24 months) and longer-term support. This mix of short-, medium-, and long-term assistance is designed to transition at-risk and homeless individuals and families into stable housing, and is also designed to prevent homelessness by assisting formerly homeless individuals in maintaining housing over time.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.