

Will Caron SB11 Testimony

Aloha, I'm Will Caron with the Young Progressives Demanding Action, testifying in support of this bill. We recognize that houselessness is a complex issue with a multitude of causes and a diverse array of effects on the community. But we fundamentally cannot sacrifice the civil rights of any segment of our population—but especially the rights of our most vulnerable among us—to satisfy others among us, regardless of any valid business or environmental concerns they might have. We must be better than that.

So-called “compassionate disruption” techniques are in-effective and only perpetuate the cyclical, co-reinforcing nature of poverty, houselessness and crime. It simply shifts the houseless problem from one neighborhood to another. When I was an undergrad at UH Manoa in 2010, there were hardly any houseless in Moiliili. I moved back to the area in 2016 and, since the implementation of compassionate disruption sweeps, the houseless population in Moiliili has exploded. These are people who were forced out of Waikiki and Ala Moana and moved mauka, simply to live in peace. Our solution has been to sweep the problem under the rug or, really, out of our tourism districts.

One of the most poverty-reinforcing effects of these ineffective and, likely, illegal search and seizure sweeps is the confiscation and destruction of private property. In particular, the loss of identification such as drivers licenses, state IDs and birth certificates is extremely disenfranchising. Contrary to the belief among some legislators that current state and city infrastructure has addressed this issue—that it is a resolved issue—the fundamental problem of civil rights violations still remains. The city and state may have become better at managing their sweeps, but the sweeps still occur; Mayor Caldwell's Thomas Square planters are still up; and houseless people are not necessarily any more capable of retrieving their belongings from a central location, calling to find out where their belongings are and, certainly, logging on to a government website at their convenience to determine the steps they ought to take, than they were when the sweeps first began. This issue is not over. And creating an agency dedicated to helping our houseless brothers and sisters maintain access to vital healthcare and housing services—just having an executive entity in their corner—is a huge first step to mitigating the damage

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