



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
HONOLULU

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

February 8, 2018

TO: The Honorable Senator Josh Green, Chair
Senate Committee on Human Services

The Honorable Senator Will Espero, Chair
Senate Committee on Housing

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

SUBJECT: **SB 2501 – RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS**

Hearing: Wednesday, February 7, 2018, 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

POSITION: The Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness respectfully opposes this bill, as currently drafted, as the formal establishment of homeless encampments is inconsistent with the State's overall strategy to address homelessness.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the bill is to require DHS to establish safe zones where homeless persons may reside, and appropriate funds for fiscal year 2018-2019.

The Coordinator notes that the adoption of safe zones is inconsistent with the comprehensive State framework to address homelessness adopted by the Hawai'i Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) in August 2016. The framework 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 and other stakeholders to increase resources for permanent housing programs, such as Housing First and Rapid Rehousing. Between 2015 and 2017, the number of permanent housing beds for homeless individuals statewide has increased by 1,986 – an increase of 146%, more than doubling the supply of permanent beds. This increase in permanent housing has contributed to an overall reduction in the number of homeless individuals statewide. In 2017, the statewide Point in

Time (PIT) count found the number of homeless people in Hawai'i *decreased* for the first time in eight years – a decrease of 701 people between 2016 and 2017.

While homelessness remains one of the most pressing challenges facing Hawai'i, it is critical that the State continue to maintain its focus and invest in programs that have proven their effectiveness in transitioning homeless individuals to longer-term housing. In 2017, the HICH studied the feasibility of safe zones in Hawaii and concluded “there is a limited body of research relating to Safe Zones, and more information needs to be collected to evaluate their overall effectiveness in addressing unsheltered homeless persons” (HICH, *Act 212 SLH 2017 Safe Zones Working Group*, December 2017).

In contrast to Safe Zones, there is a wide body of evidence that housing-focused programs, such as Housing First, are effective in ending homelessness for long-term homeless individuals with chronic disabling conditions. In particular, the State Housing First program has a housing retention rate of approximately 97% - meaning that 97% of the over-100 chronically homeless households placed in the program over the past four years remain housed and off the streets – which far exceeds the national average of 80%.

The Coordinator further notes that the 2017 Safe Zones Working Group of the HICH found that the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) remain opposed to the implementation of safe zones, and expressed concerns that the funding of safe zones may result in funding being redirected from other programs that more directly address housing. Specifically, in a 2015 report, the USICH acknowledged that the formation of encampments does not represent an end to homelessness and can “serve to distract communities from focusing on what is most important – connecting people experiencing homelessness to safe, stable, permanent housing” (USICH, *Ending Homelessness for People Living in Encampments: Advancing the Dialogue*, August 2015).

The Coordinator respectfully requests the Legislature’s support of the Governor’s Executive Budget request, which includes over \$15 million for homeless services, including \$3 million for Housing First, \$3 million for Rapid Rehousing, \$1.75 million for homeless outreach services, and \$680,000 for the Family Assessment Center. Collectively, the homeless programs

administered by DHS 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.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF
HAWAII



SUZANNE D. CASE
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ROBERT K. MASUDA
FIRST DEPUTY

JEFFREY T. PEARSON, P.E.
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

POST OFFICE BOX 621
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Testimony of
SUZANNE D. CASE
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committees on
HUMAN SERVICES
and
HOUSING

Thursday, February 8, 2018
2:55 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2501
RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

Senate Bill 2501 proposes to direct the Department of Human Services to establish safe zones where homeless persons may reside in the state. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) notes that the Administration does not support the establishment of safe zones and offers the following comments.**

If Department lands are identified as the appropriate place on which to locate safe zones, the Department requests that: 1) It be consulted regarding the property: and 2) Any properties to be used as safe zones be transferred to an agency whose mission better matches the management of safe zones.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

**TESTIMONY OF NAHELANI WEBSTER ON BEHALF OF THE HAWAII
ASSOCIATION FOR JUSTICE (HAJ) REGARDING S.B. 2501**

Date: Thursday, February 8, 2018

Time: 2:55 p.m.

Room: 225

To: Chair Will Espero, and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Chair Josh Green and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services.

My name is Nahelani Webster and I am presenting this testimony on behalf of the Hawaii Association for Justice (HAJ) regarding S.B. 2501, Relating to Homelessness.

We agree with the intent of the bill but respectfully request that section (j) on page 3 be stricken. The provision absolving the State from liability for any loss, damage, injury, or death is simply too broad and would be against public policy because it would remove the safeguards in place to protect homeless individuals.

Although the measure is well intentioned to encourage the department of human services to establish safe zones, the unintended consequences of removing the responsibility of the State to create a safe environment for the citizens residing there, is unreasonable.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please feel free to contact us should there be any questions.



46-063 Emepela Pl. #U101 Kaneohe, HI 96744 · (808) 679-7454 · Kris Coffield · Co-founder/Executive Director

TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 2501, RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

Senate Committee on Housing
Hon. Will Espero, Chair
Hon. Breene Harimoto, Vice Chair

Senate Committee on Human Services
Hon. Josh Green, Chair
Hon. Stanley Chang, Vice Chair

Thursday, February 8, 2018, 2:55 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

Honorable Chair Espero, Chair Green, and committee members:

I am Kris Coffield, representing IMUAlliance, a nonpartisan political advocacy organization that currently boasts over 400 members. On behalf of our members, we offer this testimony in support of Senate Bill 2501, relating to homelessness.

According to the 2017 statewide *Point In Time Count* (PITC) report, 7,220 houseless persons were counted on a single night in January last year, down 9 percent overall from 2016. Yet, O’ahu experienced a 0.4 percent *increase* from the previous year, with 4,959 people counted, up from 4,940 the year before. Hawai’i island saw the largest decrease in its homeless population, which fell 32 percent, or 441 people. Maui County had a 22 percent drop, or 249 people, while Kaua’i saw a 7 percent drop, or 30 fewer homeless people. Notably, the size of the houseless population on O’ahu is up more than 25 percent from 2009, when 3,638 homeless people were counted. Additionally, Department of Education officials have estimated that between 3,500-4,000 public school students experience homelessness at some point during the school year—last year’s PITC captured just over half of them—and over 91,000 students are economically disadvantaged. We know, then, that our state’s homeless population is consistently larger than the statistics show. It remains the highest per-capita homeless population in the country, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Over 30 percent of juvenile arrests in Hawai’i are for running away from home, the highest proportion in the nation. Nationally, one in seven young people between the ages of 10 and 18 will run away. Approximately 75 percent of runaways are female, while 46 percent of runaway and

homeless youth report being physically abused, 38 percent report being emotionally abused, and 17 percent report being forced into unwanted sexual activity by a family or household member, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Roughly 30 percent of runaway children will be approached for sexual exploitation within 48 hours of being on the run, with over 80 percent being approached for the commercial sex trade during the course of their time on streets. A federal study found that an estimated 38,600 runaway youth have been sexually assaulted, in the company of someone known to be sexually abusive, or engaged in sexual activity in exchange for money, food, or shelter. Runaways are perceived as easy targets for sex traffickers because they lack stable shelter, a supportive environment, and financial resources, placing them at greater risk of forced prostitution and sexual servitude.

Traffickers exploit our limited number of available shelter beds to lure young people into exploitation. As the homeless childcare provider Covenant House observes, traffickers tell homeless youth that shelters are full and ask, “Where are you going to go? Why don’t you come with me? I’ll take care of you.” Coupled with threats of and actual physical and sexual violence against the victims or their families, these coercive techniques compel runaway youth to remain enslaved. LGBTQ youth, who comprise an estimated 40 percent of the runaway and homeless youth population in the United States, are exponentially more likely to fall prey to human traffickers because of discrimination, family and community trauma, and a longing for comfort and acceptance (an estimated 26 percent of LGBTQ adolescents are rejected by their families and put out of their homes simply for being open and honest about who they are). In providing care for victims of human trafficking, IMUAlliance has heard their stories hundreds of times.

We must find innovative ways to fund homeless services, especially human services, health care, outreach, and rapid rehousing to our state’s unsheltered and at-risk population, many of whom are gainfully employed and contributing our economy. Moreover, we must find a balance between rampant real estate speculation and meeting the needs of our state’s most economically vulnerable residents. Just as our homeless population has soared over the past few years, so, too, has our state’s cost of housing. The median price of condominiums on O’ahu increased 6 percent in the summer of 2017 to a record \$425,000, while the median price for single-family homes increased by 3 percent to \$795,000, according to the Honolulu Board of Realtors, a number that they expect to increase by at least another 5 percent in 2018. Average fair market rent for two-bedroom apartments in *outlying* communities in the City and County of Honolulu now exceeds \$2,000, with the cost of a four-bedroom home in urban Honolulu now exceeding \$1.1 million. At least 43 percent of residences in Hawai’i are owner unoccupied, according to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, meaning that nearly 50 percent—and by some estimates over half—of Hawai’i’s homes are likely investment properties.

Many of those properties, in turn, are owned by mainland and foreign buyers, whose real estate market speculation is a prime driver of Hawai’i’s highest-in-the-nation cost of housing. According to a study released in May of 2016 by the Hawai’i Department of Business, Economic

Development, and Tourism, there are “clear distinctions” between the average price of homes bought by local residents, mainlanders, and foreigners. Analyzing purchases made between 2008 and 2015, DBEDT found: “The average sale price was highest among foreign buyers. The average sale price of the total of 5,775 homes sold to foreign buyers from 2008 to 2015 was \$786,186, 28.3 percent higher than the average sale price to the mainlanders (\$612,770) and 64.7 percent higher than the average sale price to local buyers (\$477,460).”

Researchers who authored the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s *Out of Reach 2017* report found that a full-time worker would need to earn \$35.20/hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market value in our state, with Honolulu experiencing a 67 percent increase in fair market rent between 2005 and 2015. Average rent for a two-bedroom unit surpassed \$2,000 in recent years, with minimum wage workers needed to log 116 hours per week at their jobs to afford a modest one-bedroom apartment at fair market value and 139 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom—a number that is equivalent to working 20 hours a day with no days off year-round. In the past three years alone, Honolulu rent has increased by more than 25 percent. While 43 percent of Hawai’i residents are renters (a number that does not include individuals and families renting outside of the regulated rental market), they earn an average wage of \$15.64/hour, scarcely enough to meet their basic needs. One out of every four households in Hawai’i report that they are “doubling up” or are three paychecks or less away from being homeless, per the Hawai’i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. Additionally, 54 percent of households are cost-burdened, meaning that they pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing costs, a number that rises to 83 percent of extremely low-income households. Put simply, homelessness is directly tied to our state’s exorbitant cost of living and penchant for catering to people who use the islands as their own private Monopoly board. We beseech you to seek innovative ways of making Hawai’i more affordable, while funding services that show aloha for our economically disadvantaged neighbors. The establishment of safe zones for the homeless is a positive step, which will allow for the coordination of a centralized continuum of care (including social and medical services) and implementation of strategies to assist people in transitioning into more permanent shelter.

When you fund housing, outreach, and human services for the homeless, you are helping to end slavery in Hawai’i. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Sincerely,
Kris Coffield
Executive Director
IMUAlliance

SB-2501

Submitted on: 2/7/2018 2:34:25 PM

Testimony for HMS on 2/8/2018 2:55:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Melodie Aduja	OCC Legislative Priorities	Support	No

Comments:

**PRESENTATION OF THE
OAHU COUNTY COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

TO THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

AND

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

THE SENATE

TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

REGULAR SESSION OF 2018

Thursday, February 8, 2018

2:55 p.m.

Hawaii State Capitol, Conference Room 225

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 2501, RELATING TO HOMELESSNESS

To the Honorable Will Espero, Chair; the Honorable Breene Harimoto, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee on Housing:

To the Honorable Josh Green, Chair; the Honorable Stanley Chang, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee on Human Services:

Good afternoon. My name is Melodie Aduja. I serve as Chair of the Oahu County Committee ("OCC") Legislative Priorities Committee of the Democratic Party of

Hawaii ("DPH"). Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on Senate Bill No.2501 relating to Safe Zones for the homeless community to reside.

The OCC Legislative Priorities Committee is in support of Senate Bill No. 2501 and is in favor of its passage.

Senate Bill No.2501 is in accord with the Platform of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i ("DPH"), 2016, as it requires the Department of Human Services to establish safe zones where homeless persons may reside.

Specifically, the DPH Platform provides that "[w]e believe in the concept of "Housing First" to develop affordable, stable housing and support services to break the cycle of homelessness for people with the fewest housing options. We support dedicated social services and housing opportunities for Hawaii's homeless population, to get them off the streets and reintegrated into society, with specific devoted services for disenfranchised groups, including but not limited to the Hawaiian community, aged-out foster kids, youth, returning veterans, the aged, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender homeless." (Platform of the DPH, P. 7, Lines 352-358 (2016)).

Given that Senate Bill No. 2501 establishes Safe Zones for the homeless community, it is the position of the OCC Legislative Priorities Committee to support this measure.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Melodie Aduja

Melodie Aduja, Chair, OCC Legislative Priorities Committee

Email: legislativepriorities@gmail.com, Tel.: (808) 258-8889

SB-2501

Submitted on: 2/8/2018 12:33:05 AM

Testimony for HMS on 2/8/2018 2:55:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mary Smart		Oppose	No

Comments:

I most strongly oppose this bill.

We must remove all the homeless off the public streets/lands. Current policies are proliferating the homeless population. This bill and several others being considered will exacerbate the problem. All the measures you have taken have increased the problem. It is time to get them off the streets -- not accommodate them on our public land.

Vote NO on this bill.