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February 11, 2019

TO: The Honorable Senator Russell E. Ruderman, Chair  
Senate Committee on Human Services

The Honorable Stanley Chang, Chair  
Senate Committee on Housing

FROM: Pankaj Bhanot, Director

SUBJECT: **SB 1131 – RELATING TO OHANA ZONES**

Hearing: Monday, February 11, 2019, 3:05 p.m.  
Conference Room 016, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports this bill, and requests amendments. DHS requests additional amendments to Act 209, Session Laws of Hawaii (SLH) 2018, so that the department has additional time to implement the pilot and have sufficient data to evaluate the pilot sites. Specifically, DHS proposes amendment to Act 209 (SLH 2018), section 4 (b) as follows:

"(b) The agencies designated by the governor shall establish [~~no later than December 31, 2018,~~] the following:",

and section 4(f) as follows:

"(f) The pilot program shall cease to exist three years from the contract execution date or on June 30, [2021] 2022, or whichever is later."

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of SB 1131 is to increase the number of 'ohana zone sites on Oahu from three to six. Appropriates funds to DHS for the 'ohana zones pilot program.

DHS appreciates that the Legislature is trying to find solutions to the shelter needs of homeless residents using Housing First principles. DHS supports solutions that increase permanent housing options.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

**SB-1131**

Submitted on: 2/9/2019 4:00:50 PM

Testimony for HMS on 2/11/2019 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mike Goodman	Testifying for Hawaii Kai Homeless Task Force	Support	Yes

Comments:

**TO:** Senator Russell Ruderman, Chair, Senator Stanley Chang, Chair, and Members, Committees on Human Services, and Housing

**FROM:** Mike Goodman, Director, The Hawaii Kai Homeless Task Force, Member, Partners in Care.

**RE:** SB1131

Hearing: Monday, 2/11/19; 3:05 pm; CR 016

Chair Ruderman, Chair Chang, and Members, Committee on Human Services, and Housing: Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of SB1131, with suggested amendments.

We support this bill, because it's crucial for us to locate and designate more land to serve the homeless.

**WE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENTS:**

**FIRST:** Ohana Zones was originally envisaged as a three-year pilot program. This bill also defines Ohana Zones as a pilot.

We propose the bill be amended so that *THE LAND DESIGNATED FOR OHANA ZONES* remain permanently for the purpose of serving the homeless, and eventually for the construction of permanent supportive housing.

A sufficient inventory of permanent housing is the only way to ultimately end the homeless crisis. To create enough housing we need land, and so the land designated for Ohana Zones should eventually be used for permanent supportive housing. The State spent years locating and designating land to use for the homeless, and it would be foolish to relinquish it after only three years.

**SECOND:** Ohana Zones were not intended to be like traditional safe zones, where homeless are given nothing more than a specified location where they have permission

to live. That didn't work here when Mayor Fasi tried it in Ala Park, and it hasn't worked on the mainland.

Ohana Zones were instead, intended to provide wrap around services similar to those provided by Housing First Programs, except the beneficiaries would be in tents or other temporary dwellings instead of apartments. The hope is this would at the very least, be a form of harm reduction, and an improvement over the current situation.

**The goals of Ohana Zones are laudable. But the pilot shouldn't try to re-invent the wheel.** Through the collective wisdom of Hawaii's homeless service providers, we know a lot about what works and what doesn't work. Therefore, the goal of the Ohana Zones pilot should be to do what we know works, in new ways which are less expensive and can be implemented immediately.

For instance, we know the Housing First program in Hawaii, has a 96.7% success rate with hard-core, mentally ill and substance addicted homeless persons, by giving them a permanent place to live, combined with *assertively offered*, wrap-around supportive services. It's important to point out, that key to the success of Housing First, is that permanent housing, in-and-of-itself, solves a host of problems related to mental illness and substance addiction; Problems that are much less likely to be resolved, even when the same supportive services are available in a shelter or group home.

That does not mean permanent supportive housing has to be in traditional brick and mortar apartments that cost an average of \$450,000 per unit and takes ten-years to build. First Assembly of God Church's program called "The Shelter", built safe, comfortable housing, using modular polystyrene domes, for about \$25,000 per unit. The domes can be assembled in less than a day, and the foundation and connections to water, electric and sewage can be assembled in weeks. (It took the church 2 years because of the permitting process.)

**Accordingly, we propose an amendment** so that another purpose of the pilot program is to investigate which ultra-low cost modular dwellings would be best suited for permanent supportive housing.

**THIRD:** A big problem with locating State land usable for permanent supportive housing is lack of infrastructure.

There are new, so-called "off the grid" technologies, which can provide drinking water, electricity, and process sewage without existing infrastructure.

We therefore propose an amendment to require the pilot program to investigate "off the grid" infrastructure technology.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**SB-1131**

Submitted on: 2/7/2019 5:22:24 AM

Testimony for HMS on 2/11/2019 3:05:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Claire Gearen	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments:

Dear Chairs Russell E. Ruderman and Stanley Chang and Vice-Chairs Karl Rhoads and Dru Mama Kanuha,

My name is Claire Gearen, and I write in strong support of Senate Bill 1131. I am also a member of Faith Action for Community Equity, which supports a continued \$200,000,000 appropriation for the rental housing revolving fund.

It is urgent that we maintain progress mitigating homelessness. As someone who commutes to work by bus and a few miles on foot, each week provides me with a temperature check of our population of unsheltered homeless. A year ago I discontinued my morning walk due to discomfort regularly passing encampments on the sidewalk in the dark.

Pu'uhonua o Waianae demonstrates the need among the houseless population (to borrow Trisha Kehaulani Watson's term) to build community together and advocate for their own safety and basic needs. While this community grew organically and is now attempting to purchase land for a legal co-housing arrangement, we see through their existence the viability of ohana zones as an approach for some members of houseless Hawai'i. Kahauiki Village is another positive model of community building as an approach to solving houselessness, and some advocates for the houseless are now calling for "community first" rather than "housing first" because of the importance of community in getting individuals and families back on their feet. Please appropriate an adequate sum for the purpose of this bill and ensure that Governor Ige spends it.

I want to say a little about the stakes of this bill beyond the houseless individuals and families that would benefit from it. I teach English at Mililani High School, where responsible and compassionate citizenship is a core of our vision and mission. In the course Participation in Democracy, students engage in Project Citizen, a group project that teaches students how to craft and suggest public policy. For the last several years, I have built off of students' experience with this project in a paper assignment that responds to Henry David Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience" and James Koshiba's more recent "Defending Hawai'i Without Machine Guns." Given three different

approaches to responding to a community problem or social injustice, including suggesting public policy, which is the best approach?

Unfortunately, this January I received the fewest papers yet to indicate working with government to suggest public policy is the best approach. These 16 and 17 year olds have grown up with the problem of homelessness and do not see it being adequately addressed. My own experience coming of age in the 1980's was much different; we knew the handful of homeless people in our neighborhood by name. I still have faith in government as shown by my presence here. What's at stake in the next decade as we tackle homelessness is a generation's faith in government to solve problems. We have capable students in a community of teenagers that is well coordinated through their connections on social media and in thriving school clubs; if we can cultivate their active engagement as citizens, we in Hawai'i will all benefit.

Please show the next generation that government can take positive action on intractable problems. Please vote aye.

With Regards,  
Claire Gearen